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HONOR O'HARA.

VOL. III.

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LONDON:
Printed by A. & R. Spottiswoode,
New-Street-Square.

HONOR O'HARA.

A Novel,

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

MISS A. M. PORTER,

AUTHOR OF " THE HUNGARIAN BROTHERS,"
" THE RECLUSE OF NORWAY,"
&c. &c. &c.

" O when shall I regain my orbit of peace and glory!"
ERSKINE's *Internal Evidence, &c.*

VOL. III.

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HONOR O'HARA.

CHAPTER I.

The next morning, and with the risen sun, Mr. Mulcaster was on his horse, in the road to ————. Dora Clavering, too, was up betimes, and down stairs. Honoria found her at eight o'clock out upon the lawn, admiring Miss Mulcaster's beautiful display of tulips. They greeted and joined, and then loitered about, waiting for others.

As they strolled from bower to bank, their conversation turned upon Dora's earliest years; some accidental detail proved that Major O'Hara had been at her father's house: Dora remembered his person imperfectly, (for she was barely eight years old then,) but sufficiently, to

render the little she could tell, deeply interesting to a daughter.

Honoria's tearful sensibility attracted Dora's sympathy: the utmost tenderness diffused itself through every expression of her lovely eyes; and her tones of soothing were so endearingly earnest, that Honoria no longer wondered at the witching effect of her sprightlier ones upon Mr. Mulcaster.

Although Dora often cast a hasty glance round, to see if the person approached whom she had expected to meet the very first, she continued indulging her companion, by tasking her recollection for trivial notices of Major O'Hara and the regiment to which he belonged. When Honoria showed her his miniature, and she not only pronounced a favourable opinion upon the likeness, but praised the nobility of the countenance, her companion could have embraced her.

By degrees all the party of the previous evening, save William, had met, and were on the lawn. Dora's spirit certainly

flagged, when Sophia observed that William was playing the idler, by way of showing how little he cared for them all. At that moment, the butler appearing at the open sashed door, announced breakfast by the bow of his head, and the flourish of his napkin.

Some amusement followed Miss Clavering having seated herself unconsciously in what was called "William's place;" because William always drank his tea out of a huge china caudle-cup that had been left him by his nurse; and this was now standing on the table, flanked by a goblet of spring water on one side, and on the other by a plate of curled parsley.

All this was explained to Dora as she persisted in sitting down. William regularly ate parsley with his bread and butter, and drank water after his tea; and as he loved to be waited upon by those he loved, Jane filled the goblet, and Isabella gathered the herb.

When we are inclined to like a person, nothing is more agreeable than to dis-

cover that they have little fancies. Fancies individualize; and besides, they afford opportunities for showing individual attention. Dora Clavering took especial note of those just mentioned; determining that whenever Mr. Mulcaster came to Ayecliffe, he should find water from the most sparkling spring, and parsley from the greenest border in the demesne.

A small note was now discovered lying upon Miss Mulcaster's plate: a large letter upon Jane's. — "From William! from William!" they severally exclaimed. Dora nearly overset the cream jug before her.

Both sisters ran over their epistles; there was an awful silence during the perusal. Dora felt so curious, and feared she looked so silly, that she longed to get away from the table; she fancied every body was looking at her. She wondered what Mr. Mulcaster could write two letters for. The most improbable and preposterous imaginations were in her mind: — it was possible that Lady Catherine had repented of her broken

love, and was off to Scotland with the forgiving William: — or he was gone out of the country, unable to remain longer in the same place with her ladyship. Nothing is too preposterous for a person in love, or on the verge of it, to believe; especially if it be to destroy their own hopes.

At length the secret of Jane's letter was partially revealed; William was gone to his father, but not to stay longer than a few hours. As she spoke, Jane shuffled two small enclosures into her pocket, one of them fell to the ground, and as she caught it up, Dora saw her own name on the superscription. Here was another subject for heart-beating and speculation. — What could Mr. Mulcaster be writing to her about? Evidently about something of which his sister was to be the judge, for the note was not given, it was put into her pocket. — This sudden visit to the Dean also! Every girl of seventeen, with heart and imagination, can follow up the chain of ideas which now linked themselves in Dora Clavering's

thoughts. She glanced anxiously on Miss Mulcaster: but her note was fast held in one hand, whilst with the other she was trying to make tea. She was, however, all trembling and agitated, and resigning her place to Henrietta, with some sudden recollection of a family order, hastened out of the room.

Jane's open heart could not contain its feelings. "That dear William," she exclaimed: "only think, Honoria, he is actually gone to tell papa, the news he heard yesterday. He knew Isabella would be so anxious. What a darling brother, to give up his own gratification, (smiling at Dora,) for the sake of shortening Isabella's suspense."

Dora with a glowing cheek, and playful tone, begged to ask what magnanimous act Mr. Mulcaster was performing. Jane hesitated a moment; then in defiance of Henrietta's downcast look, and Sophia's shake of the head, repeated the little story she had so lately told Honoria. Jane begged it might be a secret; though she felt sure it would not continue one

hour after Captain Barrington should arrive. Dora gave the desired promise; and as nothing ripens intimacies like a confidence, however trivial, very soon afterwards Jane had given, and Dora accepted, an invitation to be present at her marriage with Major Stanhope.

Major Stanhope was yet to be seen by Dora Clavering; but upon Jane's testimony, that young lady was ready to believe him at once the most charming and estimable of military men. In the midst of her overflowing tribute to the merits of her lover, Jane was mysteriously called out of the room; and soon after a servant brought in one hand a pretty basket filled with the most exquisite flowers, and a salver, upon which lay a little three cornered note, directed to Miss Dora Clavering. Dora seized it in pretty wonderment, yet aware that it was the identical bit of satin paper which had dropped awhile ago between Jane Mulcaster's hand and her pocket.

It contained only one or two of the most respectful sentences, framed after

the best ceremonial of card-writing; purporting that Mr. William Mulcaster had done himself the honour of obeying Miss Dora Clavering's commands, by finding for her the flowers she had condescended to name to him.

These flowers were examined, and admired, and exclaimed at. Mr. Mulcaster was pronounced to be a magician; for there actually was every flower which Dora had amused herself by desiring him to get for her; and where he could find them all blowing at this time of year they could not divine.

Jane, who knew that they came from the Duke of ——'s hot-house, through the agency of William's pensionary there, the head gardener, kept the secret; only reporting that the other note entrusted to her was just sent off by William's man, with a bee and a fly orchis. Half the lads in the county had been seeking them in the woods. If Dora prized her flowers, it was evident she contemplated her note with still greater complacency; and, perhaps, eventually wore it where she now placed one of the moss roses.

She took the precious flowers out of the rustic basket they came in, declaring herself too churlish to offer a single sprig to any one: then begged leave to borrow the caudle-cup and some wet sand; in which having placed them for fear they should die ere they got to Monksden, she kept possession of the basket also, saying it would come into use for gathering rose leaves. As Mr. Mulcaster's note had hinted his intention of calling at Monksden on his return, to enquire the fate of his various commissions, Dora no longer seemed unwilling to quit St. Cuthberts; but gathering that he could not be back under some hours, she waited with exemplary patience the Misses Mulcaster's pleasure for the time of her conveyance.

To Honoria the morning hours of this day, seemed never-ending. On this day she was to accompany her friends to call on Mrs. Fothergill: and though strong tides of shame and delicacy perpetually came over her, making her for the moment abhorrent of such real hu-

miliation and apparent unfeelingness, so desirous was she to bring her sorrow before the sight of Sir Edward, that she was ready to submit to any suffering in consequence.

The Misses Mulcaster ordered the carriage early; — then a friendly old gentleman came in; — it was countermanded; — it was ordered again; — new visitors appeared. Honoria felt sickening with apprehension of total disappointment: one word from herself to Jane, one confessing word, would have ended it all: but she could not bring herself to utter it.

At length the latest visitor departed; the carriage came round; the ladies hurried away for their bonnets and cloaks.

As Sophia met Honoria descending the stairs, she said carelessly, — "I wish Miss Dora Clavering had not been so very covetous about those flowers! — and that trumpery basket too! I can't bear stinginess! — I liked her so much last night, that I'm quite sorry not to like her so well to-day."

Honoria smiled pensively. "Don't you think it possible for a very generous person to be covetous of what is given them, by one they prefer to all others, or are beginning to prefer?"

"Oh yes! yes!" cried the sprightly Sophia; "well, now I shall like her still better." And away she flew to secure a seat next to Dora in the carriage.

As Jane had many visits to return, ere they proceeded to Arthur's Court, Dora requested to be set down as soon as possible; inwardly afraid of not being at home to thank her magician when he should call. To Monksden, therefore, they drove, and at Monksden they parted with unfeigned interchange of affectionate regrets on both sides; Jane and Sophia exclaiming, as the coachman flourished his whip, "What a sweet creature she is!" and Dora saying to herself as she ran up stairs to her sister's room, with her flowers, basket, and caudle-cup, "What a dear house that St. Cuthberts! what delightful sisters!" Then thinking that if ever Mr. Mulcaster mar-

ried, his wife would be very happy; and conjuring up the vision of that handsome person which had first captivated her fancy, though much better things had already touched her heart.

While the Misses Mulcaster drove from place to place, Honoria was silently communing with her own self, imagining how she would be received at Arthur's Court, and what she should say and do. She asked herself why she went. Was it to exhibit her penitence, and meanly beg for a renewal of Fitz Arthur's addresses? or was it simply to endeavour, by grateful respect, to efface that impression from the mind of Sir Everard, which her unchristian resentment against Mrs. Shafto had betrayed her into making.

Honoria's proud heart was not yet sufficiently humbled; and there still lurked there a full persuasion of her power over Fitz Arthur. She fancied she could rather die than show herself desirous of reclaiming the hand she had refused; her accepting it was out of the question: Mrs. Shafto had heard her de-

cline it; how then could she render such a testimony to her own unworldliness wholly nugatory?"

Honoria therefore sincerely believed herself intent upon nothing beyond making the proper compensation to a generous father, who had offered her the son he had rated above price. At first she expected to be met with a frown, nay, to have some very bitter words directed against her by Sir Everard; but she trusted to his natural goodness and relentingness, for softening under the influence of her determined submission. In this hope, with the sanguine spirit of her years, she suddenly woke up from her long trance, and joined the conversation around her.

As their carriage drove up to the gate at Arthur's Court, Mrs. Shafto's drove off in a different direction. The Misses Mulcaster congratulated themselves upon being just late enough to miss her. Honoria sickened with forebodings. Mrs. Fothergill was at home and they were admitted.

Mrs. Fothergill did not merely look and listen as usual, she absolutely talked; and when Mrs. Fothergill talked, you were sure to get at facts. The good lady would just as soon have thought of writing the preface to a book, (which relating nothing, she ever considered as a superhuman achievement,) as have discussed speculative subjects, or indulged in general reflections. She now repeated many things Honoria thirsted to hear. Jane Mulcaster had hoped Sir Everard was better than on the preceding Saturday: this elicited, that Sir Everard had indeed been put out of sorts that day, she could not tell why, and had been taken with a giddiness afterwards; but that it was Delaval whom she considered in a bad way. Another question produced another answer. "Delaval had never been well since the Race day; and it was very vexatious, for both when he went out and when he came back that day, she had never seen him look so well; and it was only after Sir Everard came back and kept walking with

him for an hour on the terrace, that she noticed he was as pale and as cold as a corpse. She was sure it was something about sending Thomas to sea. Sir Everard was so overfond of the boy. She was sure it drove Delaval away from home the next day, to dine at Monksden; for go he would, though his father wished him not. Mrs. Fothergill had never seen Delaval self-willed before, for she knew Sir Everard had used high words to stop him, seeing him look so ill; and even then he was playing cricket with that naughty Thomas, just to keep his father in good humour; tiring himself to death, and wearing his very heart out, by going from one sport to another with the youngster, only to coax him into *doing his mathematics.*" Mrs. Fothergill was "positive that Thomas was a much wickeder boy than people supposed, and vexed every vein of his good brother's heart: for it was only that very morning she had come unawares upon Delaval in the yew harbour, and there he was sitting with his face in his hands, and when

he looked up, his eyes were swelled out of his head. She always set Thomas down for a bad disposition, after he jumped upon her feet one day, to smash her corns; and sent the cat into Hylton's room with walnut shells on her paws. She was quite sure that if he had any feeling, he would see Delaval was too likely to go after his poor brother Hedworth, and that just from his mal-practices. Delaval was looking like a corpse candle."

While this detail was dolorously gone through, Honoria's face well deserved a simile of equal force with that Mrs. Fothergill had just used. She contrived to turn away from observation; and having gone up to a table covered with books, she went on, lifting them up and putting them down, as if curious of their titles.

At length Sir Everard's step was heard approaching. Mrs. Fothergill hastily begged no one would notice what she was saying, as her good cousin was certainly very much out of sorts just now, and she never liked to ruffle him. Each

head nodded assent; and Honoria feeling as if her very heart were flitting away, (so great was her emotion,) came forwards to join in the general salutation on the baronet's entrance.

Sir Everard apprised of who was there had been fortifying himself to meet Miss O'Hara with marked coldness: he approached the whole party, therefore, with an air of formal constraint. Being in the habit of taking all young ladies by the hand while he addressed them, he now did it successively to the Misses Mulcaster and Honoria, making scrupulously polite enquiries after the healths and relations of each: thus he seemed to make no distinction between them, and to be unlike his cordial self, simply because private concernments were troubling his thoughts. But Honoria felt there was a difference.

O the agony of finding the hand which has once pressed ours with warm affection, cold and lifeless in our grasp! The chilling touch of Sir Everard's hand, went to Honoria's soul. She was

too much afflicted for immediate tears: her hopes, her expectations, her purposes, her rash confidence in herself, withered at once.

There is a cold uniform manner which persons deeply offended are wont to assume towards the offender, that actually excludes them for ever: making the miserable man believe he may dash himself against the closed heart in vain transports of penitence and intreaty; that to him, its doors will never open again.

Honoria felt that Fitz Arthur's father was entirely changed to her: her fate then was fixed. As she decided this, a convulsed sigh escaped her. Sir Everard did not let it appear that he had heard the sigh. Honoria now prayed devoutly that Fitz Arthur would not appear; if he came with such a countenance, such a manner as his father's, she must die on the spot. With a paling cheek and quivering lip she started from her seat, and seeking but for an excuse to remove herself from his presence, hastily asked

if she should find Hylton in his sitting-room.

Sir Everard hesitated a moment, then said reservedly he believed his son had his pupils with him, (for Hylton amused his lonely hours by teaching some village lads to write,) but if Miss O'Hara would allow for such company, —

Honoria staid not for a decided negative, she curtsied the thanks she could not articulate, and hurried away.

Ere she tapped at Hylton's door, she paused to listen if his brother Delaval were with him ; had he been there, she would have flown back more hastily than she had come : but she heard only the low, gentle tones of Hylton, gentle even to tenderness. Their sweetness softened her emotions, and she could have wept, had she dared to allow herself such an indulgence under a roof of Sir Everard Fitz Arthur's.

Her irresolute tap was answered by a summons to enter.

At sight of her, Hylton's cheek flushed; he half rose from the chair he had not

power to quit. "Miss O'Hara," he exclaimed; his manner was agitated, his voice fluttering; "pray, pray sit down." She took the seat he pointed to; it was not beside himself, and he had not called her, "dear Miss O'Hara:" the desolation of Honoria's feelings was complete. She could not speak. Hylton, with evident surprise, and more emotion, enquired if she had seen any body, — his father he meant. Honoria felt then that Hylton knew all. She answered vaguely, for the presence of the village lads checked any effusion of confidence.

Meanwhile Hylton, distressed and embarrassed, not merely from others being with them, but from the consciousness of being obliged to give up intimacy with her, whose kindness had so often cheered him, with difficulty strung together a few questions about her friends at St. Cuthberts, continuing as he spoke, to superintend the tasks of his studious companions.

Honoria fixed her brimming eyes upon him, with the abandonment of actual

despair; he was not looking at her; his eyes (never raised to her face,) were surrounded by a ring of livid red, a sign which tells of long continued tears: his complexion was more than ordinarily pale, and such a sad listlessness marked his movements, that Honoria knew he suffered.

"You are worse than ill to-day, dear Hylton," she whispered, with suffocating emotion, moving her seat close to his, regardless of the young clowns around; "or else I have forfeited your kind regard as well as Sir ——." She could not pronounce Sir Everard's name, an universal trembling stopped her. "A little time, and if you wish it, I dare say all will come right again," rejoined the amiable boy, moved by her tone, yet from not looking at her, unconscious of her extreme distress. "At present I own, I am a little pained, disappointed—and my father—." "Your father! what!" Honoria asked with breathless anxiety. "He is so very resentful, that Delaval's heart is half broken; it kills him to hear harsh things

said of —— but my father is angry: I am only sorry, sadly, sadly sorry. — Delaval is most unhappy; however, if he is able at last to do what my father wishes, then we may all be happy friends again. I hope he will, for your sake as well as ours and his own; for then you need not grieve that you could not—." The bashful Hylton left the sentence unfinished. Honoria sat fixed. The knell of all her hopes and wishes came in those few words. Sir Everard must be urging his son to address Miss Clavering, and if that marriage took place, then Honoria would cease to be of consequence enough, even for resentment! — then she might come again to Arthur's Court! — then she might resume habits of intimacy with its inmates! So to come to Arthur's Court again, seemed now impossible to her; she thought she was looking on those once beloved and welcoming walls for the last time: she never should re-enter them!

The conviction that her presence there was now displeasing to its master, renewed

her pride for a single instant. She got up from her seat with a flushed cheek, inarticulately repeating, "Then God bless you, Hylton!" convulsively pressed his hand, and hurried from him.

Happily she encountered no one in her disordered way along the passage, and when she re-entered the parlour, found only those she had left there: her quick return was accounted for, by the circumstance of finding Hylton so well employed, and as the Misses Mulcaster wished to get home, they left their kind compliments to Captain Fitz Arthur, and took their leave.

When they were all seated in the carriage, each of them expressed wonder at the singular manner of Sir Everard; and at Delaval's non-appearance. As Honoria owned to Hylton's being out of spirits, they agreed that something must have happened amongst them. Jane hoped no new vexation had arisen out of some act of inconsiderate kindness in the credulous baronet; Honoria briefly joined in those remarks, then hurried convers-

ation to other topics. She was in that state of nervous agitation, that one throb more of agony, must have yielded her up in passionate abandonment to its outward expression. With a quick and wandering eye she talked of the hills and the trees they were passing, of William Mulcaster, of the Dean, of her uncle, till fairly exhausted by her own volubility and tension of heart, she fell back all at once in the carriage, with something like a death groan.

The coachman was stopped; and in the midst of her friends' consternation, alarm, and anxiety, Honoria was lifted out into a cotter's hut by the road side, and there, after much difficulty, recovered.

Miss Mulcaster and Sophia were bending over her as they supported her in their arms: but Jane, the affectionate Jane, was at her feet, clasping her knees, with her raised and streaming eyes fixed upon the sufferer's face.

Honoria no sooner met those eyes, and was conscious of their deep and dear

searchingness, that she felt they demanded explanation, and had she and Jane been alone, she must have thrown herself upon her neck, and there wept out her present anguish: but the presence of the sisters and of the cotters checked the impulse; and as Jane joyfully exclaimed, with a fresh burst of tears, "Now God be praised!" she only bent her face to meet the other's fervent kiss, with a whisper of earnest heart-speaking thanks. At that moment Mr. Mulcaster rushed in: he had seen the carriage standing without, and confusedly gathered from the servants, that one of the ladies was taken ill; the ashy face he presented, spoke a brother's feelings. When the matter was explained to him, he protested that nothing was so sure to happen: Miss O'Hara always chose to sit with her back to the horses, and he dared to say, his sister Jane who always thought it right (and it was the most villanous thing possible,) to cram people as if they were going to plough, must have been making her eat cold tongue, (the most

unwholesome thing in the world, by the way,) or plum cake, or some such heavy trash, and so she had fainted; and as he scolded the innocent Jane, who stood fondly, sadly looking on Honoria without attending to her darling brother, he kept rubbing Honoria's clay-cold hands, with genuine, kindly solicitude.

There is something in brotherly attentions from a man who is not one's brother, peculiarly agreeable; they give one the pleasure of feeling obliged, in addition to the happy consciousness of being valued.

Honoria frankly returned the pressure of the manly hand grasping hers, while she thanked William, and assured him that she was better: when quite satisfied of this, and hearing her wish she was back at St. Cuthberts, he bade his sisters prepare to go, for now that he had popped upon them, he need not pursue his road home, but gallop away to Monksden just to see how Lady Henderson liked the orchises.

As he drew Jane aside to question her

about his other note, he slipped the letter into Isabella's hand with which he had been speeding, when they encountered thus, and being more than content with what Jane volubly whispered, he saw them into the carriage, and cheering his horse, was the next minute over a hedge, as if he were commencing a fox chase. Honoria envied more than his natural light-heartedness at that moment; hope and confidence were on his cheek. She was now gently forced by Jane to lean back in a corner, told to keep quiet, and not think it necessary to talk; for that Isabella had a letter to read, and Sophy and she could amuse themselves with their own cogitations. Honoria attempted a smile and obeyed.

Miss Mulcaster, pale as Honoria had been, opened her father's letter with trepidation; after she had read some parts of it more than once, she took out her handkerchief, transferring the letter to her sisters. Honoria heard her say, sobbingly, "My father is so kind, so

very kind!" — and covering her face, she leaned it against her youngest sister's shoulder.

What was passing amongst these affectionate young women, afforded Honoria a proper pretext for continued stillness; so that she had time to compose herself, and regain some self-command ere they reached St. Cuthberts. The dressing bell was just ringing: they went therefore directly to their toilets.

Honoria had thrown off her hat, and was casting herself upon a seat to think over her killing reception at Arthur's Court, when the door of her chamber opened, and Jane Mulcaster appeared; her heart was in her countenance: she came forward with a look of frank confidence in her friend's affection.

"Well now, my dearest Honoria, tell me what has happened to you? What can have distressed you so at Arthur's Court."

Honoria tried to evade the question, confusedly avoiding Jane's eyes, while pleading head-ache, faintness, regret at

having to go back to Edenfell, sorrow at their longer separation hereafter. Jane knew that Honoria said truth in saying all this, but she saw there was something more either to be uttered or withheld; and taking both her friend's hands in hers, she looked her full in the face: "Now, Honoria, is this kind, to the friend that has not one thought concealed from you! — there *is*, there *must* be something more than what you tell me, to make you look thus, — suffer thus, — tremble thus, — and so suddenly!"

"O not so suddenly," exclaimed Honoria, bursting into tears and falling on her neck. "I have been distressed these many days: but I cannot — ought not to tell you, my Jane — not at present; a few months perhaps—(when Fitz Arthur is married, she thought) but not now! — not now! — I have given pain where I — where I would not have given it — and I myself ——" she broke off, incapable of uttering more.

Jane pressed her against her heart,

"I guess it all, poor love! poor love!" (tenderly kissing her cheek between each term of endearment,) "I always thought it would come to something like this at last; it is a great grief not to be able to return a deserving person's affection: —don't say a word," she cried, seeing the self-humiliated Honoria endeavouring to interrupt her; "I will not have any further explanation: now I know that it is not for yourself exactly, that you are suffering thus, I am relieved — you shall stay quietly up stairs till the evening; we will send you some soup or chicken; and by tea-time you may be able to join us. My sisters fancy it was the cold milk we drank at the dairy, so they have no suspicion." Jane added, that most likely William would be asked to stay at Monksden, therefore Honoria need not change her dress; and if she could come down stairs, they would have reading, in place of music or conversation.

Gratefully did Honoria return Jane's affectionate embrace, accepting her con-

siderate proposal; no sooner was she alone, than she abandoned herself completely to her own bitter regrets.

After what Hylton had said, it was evident that she and Delaval Fitz Arthur were never voluntarily to meet again, until they could meet with perfect indifference on the side of him whose indestructible attachment her vain and obstinate heart had too foolishly reckoned upon. The notion of Fitz Arthur's indifference, was absolutely appalling to her: for Sir Everard's anger, nay estrangement, she had been prepared; but his son's resolute effort to transfer his affection to another, came on her with the force of a thunderbolt. Had the possession, the certainty of possessing those affections, been hitherto without her consciousness the source of all her spirits, all her activity, all her commendable pursuits, all her self-estimation, all her happiness! if it were so, what was to become of her in the future, when he should take the heart she had spurned,

and pledge it to another? yet this was but justice; and her spirit bowed before a deep and contrite sense of it. Sir Everard and his son had only to know the nature of her present misery to add disdain to their resentment, and then the measure of her deserved punishment would be full. But why did she wrong Fitz Arthur by calling him resentful? he had not showed himself so to her, when they met at Monksden; and from Hylton's broken sentences it was too evident that he contended for her defence, with his father. In all things Delaval Fitz Arthur was as far above her, as the heavens above the earth; she never had been worthy of him: he was reserved for a wife more in harmony with his many virtues.

Aware that to prevent a suspicion of her greatest cause of grief arising in those at Arthur's Court, she must disguise her feelings from other friends, she made a heart-wringing effort to compose her looks, and smother her tears. After three undisturbed hours, she suc-

ceeded ; and descended to the sitting-room of the family.

There she was cordially hailed by the sisters ; an easy chair was wheeled round for her by one ; a cushion placed under her foot by a second ; eau de cologne given her by a third ; and a reviving cup of strong coffee, made for her by Jane.

As Jane had predicted, William staid to dine at Monksden, and in conversation about him and Dora Clavering, the tea-table hour was whiled away. After that different pieces of needlework were produced, and severally wrought on ; whilst Henrietta read aloud Ann Radcliffe's Mysteries of Udolpho, then *the new book*. In its music of style, and magic of genius, even Honoria's private griefs lost themselves, till the hall clock announced prayer and bed-time. Mr. Mulcaster entered at the instant.

He came in rapturous spirits. Lady Henderson was so pleased with his orchises, and Miss Dora Clavering was so amused with his creation of flowers ; and she was to bring him back his caudle

cup (for now he would not part with it, even to her whose lips' touch had made it thus extravagantly valuable); and she had told him how she fed his peacocks after breakfast at St. Cuthberts, and he was going off to-morrow betimes to Newcastle, to enquire the character of a cook for Lady Henderson. Bursts of laughter from Jane and Sophia greeted him at this. "He go on purpose to Newcastle, to enquire the character of a cook!" — "No, he was not going on purpose; he wanted a new whip, — not such rascally things as they sold at Morpeth, — and he luckily recollected it, just as Lady Henderson was bemoaning herself for not having any body fit to send about this woman's character, and so he had offered his services. And he had other commissions too; Dora Clavering wanted card paper and colours to make him a model of Monksden in return for his flowers, (he was so fond of Monksden,) and her fair sister had entrusted him with a bracelet to get mended." In short he was going to do more business than man ever did; declaring he was

proud of the title the Misses Clavering had given him, of Lady Henderson's fac totum.

Henrietta secretly wondered, how Lady Henderson could be so taken in: yet Henrietta herself, seriously engaged to a serious young man, could not believe her brother in earnest even now; for he kept taking out the eldest Miss Clavering's bracelet from his breast, kissing it fervently and putting it back, resisting all intreaties to show more of it, than was displayed by its glittering whisk to and from his bosom.

"Miss O'Hara," he suddenly exclaimed, "I have settled it in my own mind, that there is no life like that of a plain country gentleman. You never saw anything look so comfortable as Sir John Henderson did to day. There he was, in that pleasant west room, with his rosy-faced children playing about him, his good-humoured wife on one side of him, and those lovely girls on the other; — they working, and I reading aloud; — he fast asleep! — I never saw

such happiness!" "A regular sinecure with good Sir John, however," observed the sly Henrietta. William gave her a pinch instead of an answer, continuing the description of his own feelings, which he had just before mistaken for his friend's positive enjoyment.

"I once used to think nothing so enviable as having a place like a barrack, where one might quarter whole regiments of visitors as they do at Lord Sarum's; where you never sit down with less than thirty people at table for weeks at a time: but now I suspect that, must be a desperate bore to my lord and my lady, who do it every day in the year. So I am for a moderate income, and a moderate house, and an immoderately pretty wife."

"Well, and what then?" asked Sophia.

"Why then, I would draw round a fire of my own coal, with my own wife, and my own children, and let the outward world rave round my doors and windows, like baffled winds; not one of them should get entrance."

"I trust you will find Sir John Hen-

derson exactly of that opinion to-morrow," resumed Henrietta. William gave her another little pinch; then warning her to call back a more Christian temper, rang to assemble the servants for prayers.

The next morning Honoria was to be sent home. She rose from her sleepless bed as soon as she heard any one stirring in the house, and going to the window, saw that it was raining heavily. With something of dismay she looked up at the clouds and down to the soaked earth, dreading a change in the Misses Mulcaster's plans from the rain's continuance. She knew they would eagerly catch at any pretext for detaining her; and now her soul yearned for the solitude and seclusion of her own poor little chamber at Edenfell.

As she stood at the window examining the horizon, she saw Mr. Mulcaster striding gaily away to the stables for his horse. He, too, looked up to the clouds, (the rain splashing meanwhile on his face with the force of a water spout,) but he looked with the smile of a man defying

weather, nay rejoicing in its impotent fury; and very soon afterwards the clatter of his horse's hoofs was heard down the flinty road.

As it never "held up" all day, Mr. Mulcaster had the supreme felicity of being completely soaked through for Dora Clavering. A felicity, (I appeal to all gallant-spirited lovers to bear me out in my assertion,) which is assuredly the greatest of all minor ones; combining notions of high self-esteem for personal suffering bravely endured, respect for the serious fire which will not be extinguished by a wetting, and delicious expectations of consequent petting and praise from their sovereign lady and mistress. Honoria sent a blessing after him as he went; mournfully hoping he would be happy with the charming young creature of whom his thoughts were now full, when she was wearing out her desolate self-blighted life, in sad, unsolaced, uncheered singlehood.

Her eye then fell upon a note directed to herself, lying on a visiting ticket of

Mrs. Shafto's. The maid who had laid it there the preceding day, when the ladies were gone to Arthur's Court, had neglected mentioning it. Honoria, with some surprise and no pleasure, found it contained an invitation for her to dine at Shafto place with her uncle and aunt, on the very day she was engaged to spend at Ravenshaw; either accompanying the Dean and his family, or meeting them there. It was all ceremonious civility; puzzling Honoria to guess, why Mrs. Shafto should invite her now to her house, unless her former enmity had solely arisen from repugnance to see her the wife of Fitz Arthur, and had expired with such fear. Whatever were the reasons of the invitation, to accept it was luckily out of Honoria's power; to have done so, (accompanying her aunt,) would at any time have been revolting to her: but with the recollection full in her mind, of all which Mrs. Shafto's persecuting malice had driven her into, the bare idea of that lady made her shudder. She sat down immediately, and wrote a

polite announcement of her previous engagement to Lady Wearmouth.

It was still raining heavily, when she met her friends in the breakfast parlour. They had taken it for granted that she would remain with them till the morrow, and remain she did. The day passed quietly, though in occupation; for Jane, aware of her friend's bad spirits, ingeniously contrived to fill up the hours, by a variety of little useful tasks for herself; which circumstance she kindly felt would make them interesting to those employed. William on his return from Newcastle, where he staid a marvellous length of time, had only a moment to rush in, dripping like a river god, with Miss O'Hara's shoe, which he had come round by Ravenshaw, on purpose to oblige her by bringing. Sophia expressed astonishment that Lord Francis should send it home without a copy of verses: Honoria thanked him for the omission, and listened with more satisfaction to his very proper message by his friend. William reminding his

sisters that they were all to dine at Ravenshaw the next day, where the Monksden family were also going, then dashed out again, to dress himself for a dinner at Sir Thomas Sykes's, where the Hendersons and their fair visitants were to be the attractions. "William certainly has the knack of compelling every thing to his purposes," said Henrietta, as he darted away, "even time is manageable with him. I think it will be only a week to-morrow since the Misses Clavering appeared amongst us, and in that short space he has seen Dora at least fourteen times: twice every day I really think, — nay for hours each time. Many men have not had as much of their charmer's company in as many months, as I am reckoning days."

This remark being assented to, naturally drew on a calculation of the days and weeks in which Jane had seen Stanhope; after which, conversation took its usual desultory range.

A fine night succeeding to the rain of the day, empowered Honoria to press

for being sent home directly after breakfast on the following morning; she pleaded the continuance of her nervous head-ache as a reason for removing herself from the joyful agitation of Major Stanhope's return, and the Dean's return; urging that her aunt would never forgive her if she did not appear as soon as possible to apologise for not going the day before. Jane saw at once what her friend wished, and with her usual absence of selfishness, not only ordered the carriage to come round the next morning punctually by eleven o'clock, but over-ruled every one's wish, even her own, of going to set her down.

In pursuance of this arrangement, Honoria bade adieu to St. Cuthberts at the appointed time, with a weight of gratitude at her heart, for Jane's kindness; precious was the privilege thus granted her, of exhausting her tears unseen and unmolested; for she could not return to her home (ever comfortless) without a new feeling of regret. Once there, she would have less chance

than at any other place, of accidentally encountering the friends from whose dwelling she now deemed herself an exile; yet she was voluntarily returning to her home! A sick heart is as restless as a sick body: ever expecting ease in the place or position in which it is not. Honoria's heart was all sickness.

During the early part of her drive, she gave little heed to outward objects; but as the latter portion of the road lay by the back of Arthur's Court, her attention revived.

The steep path wound down through what in the north, was formerly termed a peth; that is, a sunken road descending between two precipitous banks: the one in question, lay under banks of this description most romantically broken, and fringed with the Fitz Arthur coppices.

As the carriage slowly descended the wet and miry hill, its top was swept by the long branches of some young larch-trees, waving their bright green heads in the spring air; Honoria let down the window to breathe their aromatic smell,

and to look wistfully at them, because they belonged to the home of Fitz Arthur. The whooping of Thomas Fitz Arthur entered with the breath of the larches; he was calling out to his brother, from among the copsewood at some distance; and rather nearer, she heard the slow mellow voice of Delaval, begging he would spare him a little, for that he was tired, and not very well. She looked eagerly out; then as hastily drew back, and almost buried herself in the corner of the carriage; but she had nothing to fear: he whose despondent tones had penetrated to her soul, was unconscious of her passing by; and had already cast himself on the grass, for a moment's pause from distracting exercise.

After a while, Honoria raised herself, and listened; but the carriage was now clear of the peth, and was rattling along the level and stony road. Trees and banks seemed flying past her, but she saw them not; she saw only Fitz Arthur's fancied figure; she heard only Fitz Arthur's well-known voice; so sweet, yet

so sad, so hopelessly sad! every fibre of Honoria's frame thrilled to the remembrance. Fitz Arthur then, with a spirit abandoned at least to temporary wretchedness, was wandering there, waiting upon the capricious will of a boy who neither knew nor cared for his misery; he was denying himself the indulgence of his own lawful regrets, that he might partially indulge one who had hitherto known no control, and whom too sudden strictness might exasperate into utter rebellion; he was suffering perhaps after generous contests with his father on her account; he was struggling, probably, against some lingering fondness, some lingering hopes about her; and doing so, that he might propitiate Sir Everard, by the sacrifice of himself, in marriage with another: he was doing all this, in sad, unwitnessed desolation, and she was by, with a heart flowing out in contrition and tenderness, yet might not bring the repentant flood to him.

At that moment, Honoria's pride drew its last breath: gladly would she have

gone, and wept out her soul at his feet, but there were other feelings to restrain her, though pride were dead: delicacy had much, generous considerations more, control over her: she knew herself without fortune or important connections; she knew Sir Everard's estates were yet trammelled, and that Miss Clavering, whom circumstances pointed to, had not only the means of repairing every pecuniary loss, but of widely extending Fitz Arthur's ability to bless and to benefit. She had now become sensible (for had she not seen it?) that man's affection is not immortal, if unreturned: she had but to endure the imagination of Fitz Arthur's suffering for a few short months or weeks, and after that she would behold him happy in the possession of an admirable wife and an abundant fortune. She only was to be the one inconsolably afflicted; and that would be, because she had transgressed: her fault was positive. She had nursed up a set of false arrogant notions respecting her own merits, and the qualifications of the

person she could deign to like; and she had been so infatuated as to sacrifice the real affections of her heart, to these preposterous fancies. She had wilfully too, shut her eyes against her own sensations, at a moment when Fitz Arthur's looks and voice had agitated her with tenderest pleasure; and had immediately afterwards forgot every thing, except the base triumph over Mrs. Shafto.

Her deserved fate then, was what she now suffered; by seeking to avert it, she would be adding guilt to guilt: since if it were possible for her, by any testimony of repentance, to regain Fitz-Arthur's heart, she must do so at the expence of his harmony with his father; and a union with her, must for ever prevent him for realising those prospects of great wealth and increased usefulness, which he might now be fairly looking to for eventual consolation. To repress every outward expression of her inward feelings was therefore become her duty; and as she felt this, she prayed for grace and ability to withstand every

temptation of bringing herself into the presence or thoughts of him she had rejected.

Believing it a duty also, to acquaint her uncle with what had occurred, she resolved after making such a confidence to him, never to reveal it to another, until Fitz Arthur were given without recall to a new affection or to a happy bride. When once her uncle had seen her griefs and her penitence, she would close all up, and let her wound bleed on to death. Honoria could not at present, in the very grasp of severest anguish, remind herself that a higher duty yet remained, a higher and a harder one; that of submitting the will and the wishes of our fondest, purest passion, entirely to the decrees of Almighty Power. She suffered her thoughts to wander round Miss Clavering, hoping she might have quite forgotten the object of her early attachment; yet grieving that Fitz Arthur should not receive the first fruits of the heart he was to look to for devotedness and happiness. Such

reflections lasted all the way to Edenfell.

In any other state of mind, Honoria, after a week's absence from her home (and that week spent at St. Cuthberts), would have been struck with the mortifying contrast between the cheerfulness, elegance, warmth, and plenty of the one, and the dirt, confusion, discomfort, and squalidness of the other.

She had unluckily returned upon the cleaning day, a period during which mops, pails, and puddly water, appeared in every room. Now it often happens that the very apparatus for cleanliness brings an accession of dirt; this was ever the case in the Rectory. The drudging slattern who lorded over these cleansing instruments, was in herself a mass of foulness; and as the principal part of her time was spent in exchanging querulous retorts with her scolding mistress, and as Mrs. Meredith evidently only desired a a form of house scouring, not a vital application of the scrubbing brush, the whole scope of the appropriated day

seemed to be a free latitude for high voices and vindictive epithets.

Honoria heard the well known sounds as she walked up the fore court, and on entering the passage, encountered Mrs. Meredith, soaring like a flying dragon between the staircase and the kitchen. The virago was hastening, at the noise of carriage wheels, to bid the footboy slip his shoes up at heel, and deny her to visitors. Turning round upon our heroine with the face of a firebrand, she exclaimed. "So Miss Honor, you are come at last; pretty weather you have choosed after all for coming home in! dirtying every place with your feet, coming through that sloppy fore court." Honoria mildly apologised and explained.

"I suppose you know you are asked to go with us to dine at Shafto Place?" resumed Mrs. Meredith, in a tone between snappishness and elation: "a much greater honour, I can tell you, than going to Ravenshaw. The great folks there admits every body and any body, Mr.

Chaplin says; so it is no favour to be treated like riff-raff. At Mr. Shafto's, Mr. Chaplin says, we shall meet only the topping people; so I desire you will go and trim up your best gown, and don't let me see you in such dowdy things *as has* no trimming. Do you hear what I say, Miss Honor? Don't stand fidgeting your feet there on the new mat, dirtying it; but go up stairs at once, and throw me down a duster out of your uncle's study; — he's gone a walking."

Honoria turned a look through the passage window, whence she saw the gathering clouds descending in rain; then with silent commiseration of her uncle's destiny in marriage, and half inclined to believe marriage is a destiny, glided swiftly up to her room.

As she closed the door she heard the angry accents of her aunt, enquiring what she meant that she did not throw her down that duster. Honoria had forgotten the duster; so hastening back with laudable zeal, carried down two,

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and returned with all speed to her little strong hold.

What a house! what an aunt! what habits of living! how could she ever have felt indignant at any one for shunning the acquaintance of persons thus voluntarily degrading themselves? For the moment during which she asked herself this question she even pardoned Mrs. Shafto; but now recollecting that it was not that lady's obvious disregard of her which had outraged her feelings, but her open insolence and active malignity, she did herself justice, and awarded the due share of blame to her haughty neighbour.

Still, however, as the din and disorder of all within her uncle's forlorn mansion pressed upon her senses, she thought with more tenderness and deeper self-condemnation of Fitz Arthur's generous love.

As she thought more of the prejudices and demands of the world at large, the more clearly did she see the liberality of such individuals as those who relinquish

these demands, upon a principle of wider benevolence. Had Fitz Arthur been selfishly prudent, he would have escaped the entanglement of his affections by abstaining from that intimate converse with her which he certainly began, solely from a desire of being useful to her mind; and had he not afterwards been ready to sacrifice for her sake many an honourable ambition and delicate repugnance, he would not have sought her for a wife.

Honoria was, in fact, discovering, that although to man in a simpler state of existence little more is of consequence beyond the personal qualities of his chosen partner; — to man living in society, bound round with different duties, habits, and tastes, her individual qualities make but a part of what is essential to their mutual well-being and concord: harmony in all things being of infinite importance. How bitterly now did Honoria feel the want of such a monitor and guide as a judicious mother! had she been so blest, how much might have been

spared to her — how much of error and repentance of error! — had she been properly taught at first, how little would she have had to unlearn! Now she was every day unweaving more rapidly than she had done the day before, imaginations, presumptuous expectations, false theories, absurd notions, all the pernicious fantastic gossamer webs in which she had hitherto wrapt herself. She had unfortunately been early thrown amongst persons whose intellect and experience were not calculated to attract respect; she had been left to make her own opinions upon every subject of consequence: pride of heart, pride of intellect, pride of beauty, were fostered in her; she came in the full glow of these, to a place where she immediately charmed all that knew her, but where her guardians were an uncle of retired habits with romantic feelings, and an aunt whose conduct as well as understanding forced the sentiment of contempt instead of deference. Thus, where was the poor orphan to seek salutary humility? — where was she to gain

the light so necessary to show her that she was wandering far from truth and reason? — Only Fitz Arthur had attempted to set her right, and him she had driven from her side. Her reckless hand had thrown that heart away, while yet unconscious of its full value.

That very night, after a day of difficult self control in her aunt's agitating society, Honoria laid open her desert heart to her uncle. Mrs. Meredith was gone to bed, and Honoria having waited in her own chamber till she heard her draw her closing curtains, stole back to the study, and there amazed and afflicted the cheerless Mr. Meredith with her weeping confession; it was a full confession: Honoria sentenced her proud spirit to the punishment of owning its late repentance.

Mr. Meredith could give her no comfort. Meek as he was in character, and strangely as he had suffered compassionate influences to mismatch him, he had nevertheless the nice feeling of a gentleman in humble circumstances; and he owned

with her, that interference on his part now, was impossible. His poor girl had indeed committed a heinous fault, and she must pay the penalty: she must support the pain of perpetual banishment from what had been a sort of home to her; and consent to resign making advances to win back Sir Everard's favour. Such return could not be sought without an explanation of her past offensive conduct; and situated as she was, and the Fitz Arthur family were, such explanation must appear mean, and would actually be selfish. Though he could not veil offences from a culprit, Mr. Meredith did not willingly bruise the broken reed: he saw that his poor niece "sorrowed well nigh unto death," and as he gave sighs for her tears, his pious and tender exhortations called on her to believe that good would eventually flow from evil; that calamity turned to the purposes of spiritual improvement in this world, will shortly and eternally bless us in the next: — and that if she lived to see Fitz Arthur dispensing benefits through

a wide circle, by means of an enlarged fortune, having also a wife gladly recognized by all his connections, she might derive much consolation for her own loss in him.

Honoria's rebellious emotion yielded at length to the gentle influence of Mr. Meredith's mingled kindness and admonitions; and kissing his hands, his cheek, his brow, with convulsive agitation, she promised to submit herself to the punishment she had drawn upon her head, and remain in her own poor lot of humble usefulness, without repining. Till now it had been a question, whether she should keep her engagement with Lady Wearmouth, or venture to ask permission to break it, for the sake of accompanying her uncle and aunt to Shafto Place; but after their present conference, Mr. Meredith offered to conclude the sharp contest for her; and however his wife might storm, assured her she should not be urged into the society of Mrs. Shafto.

Grateful for this indulgence, with Fitz Arthur's voice mingling in remem-

brance with her uncle's tones, upon her heart rather than her ear, she withdrew to bed, and there sank all at once into sleep. Such sleep as often overwhelms the unhappy in the very midst of heaviest woe; as if anticipating the death they long or look for.

More than once did Honoria start from her rest, fancying she heard that mournful voice beside her pillow. Scarcely conscious where she was, she listened in wild amaze; then recognised the sound of her Eolian harp wailing in the window of the staircase. Thoughts of Mr. Frazer then crossed her, reminding her how differently she had felt, and how calmly she had slumbered, after refusing his hand: again she turned on her tear-soaked pillow, to wonder how she could have been so long blind to the nature of her delight in the society of the generous, devoted, self-denying Fitz Arthur.

CHAP. II.

The second day after our heroine's return to her home, Miss Jane Mulcaster came alone to see her; that is, she was left at the Rectory by the Dean, who went on to Ravenshaw, where he had private business to discuss with Lady Wearmouth.

Honoria had schooled her looks into composure, and Jane was not sufficiently acquainted with her heart's secret, to guess that the calm was only on the surface. She was, besides, too happily agitated, for much observation on another. Major Stanhope had arrived the preceding night, and every thing was settled even to fixing the day. They were to be married that day fortnight, and his father and elder brother and sister were to come down to St. Cuthberts; and Honoria must be sure to

look her best, and not think about what she was to wear, as a dress was preparing for her exactly like those of the other bridemaids. The bounteous Jane had insisted upon giving her sisters their habiliments for the occasion; and would fain have done the same to Miss Dora Clavering, but their degree of intimacy did not warrant such a freedom; so she was obliged to content herself by telling that young lady what were to be the materials and fashion of the dress, denying herself the pleasure of bestowing it.

Honoria, after entering warmly into her friends throbbings of joy and regret, hope and apprehension, her fondness for the home she was about to quit, and her devotedness to him for whose sake she was quitting it, enquired the progress of William's growing inclination. As yet, his was a smooth sea, a voyage of delight, unruffled by gale or cloud. "He actually lived at Monksden, Jane said, where to be sure, the Hendersons must be blind, if they did not see his attrac-

tion; yet Henrietta thought Lady Henderson really was simple enough to think he came to play with her children, and Sir John fancied it was for his wine and his billiard table and his farming lessons. However, it was all very well, for if Dora liked William he would be a very fine match for her; and happily the Dean, by seeing and saying nothing, showed that he would not oppose such a thing. William gave his father every opportunity for speaking, so he could not be taxed with concealing his present liking. Jane added, that her brother was off again to Newcastle on some mysterious errand, (Honoria must know he loved a bit of mystery,) and unless he knocked up all his horses, most probably he would be there again in a day or two. However, some day, very soon, he was to escort the Misses Clavering on horseback to call on Miss O'Hara, and she would then see how happy he looked."

This oration of the voluble, animated Jane, was twice interrupted by Mrs. Meredith coming in with her company-

face to ask fawning questions about the approaching marriage. Jane Mulcaster was, indeed, something of a favourite with the selfish wife of the hapless rector, because Jane, to propitiate her on Honoria's account, not only took breathless pains to please her, by little gossip and exclamations at her pretty gown and handsome cap, but generally brought her substantial presents. On this day she produced a huge basket of forced vegetables and fruit; blushingly promising cakes, favours, and gloves, on the bridal morning.

As Mrs. Meredith shut the door, Jane turned to Honoria, "What a relief when she goes away! William wickedly says, I always look as if I saw the Evil One chained, when she is speaking civilly to me: in truth, I am quaking for fear she should fly out. Temper, temper, dearest! that is the corner stone of home happiness. I thank God, Stanhope's is so angelic." — Jane was no more a churl of her epithets than Lady Haverford, but she generally applied them better.

The return of the carriage broke up

this conference. Finding Mr. Meredith absent, the Dean would not alight: his thoughts being too seriously occupied about the future destinies of his children, to allow of his usual strain in transient conversation. Jane, therefore, took an affectionate leave, and hurried away.

Not long after her departure, Mr. Meredith took his place in his niece's room. He had been to Arthur's Court: there he had been received by Delaval with much cordiality though evident emotion: Sir Everard was friendly, too, but somewhat on the reserve. As Delaval, having pleaded occupation, quickly disappeared, Mr. Meredith had at once begun upon the subject most interesting to him. Not a great deal had passed on either side. Mr. Meredith was anxious to convince the Baronet that not only he himself, but Honoria, was deeply sensible of the honour conferred on the latter by Delaval Fitz Arthur's preference, and as warmly grateful for the singular generosity of Sir Everard; yet at the same time he guarded their joint respectability

with such jealous care, that not a word expressed the lurking wish of winning back the tender of Fitz Arthur's hand. Sir Everard had hastily accepted the implied apology, contained in the hurry of spirits under which Honoria was said to have acted; treating the proposal as a thing to be no more remembered, except as it must just at present render it not quite pleasant for him to meet her in society; but adding it would be different, when his son was induced, as he hoped he soon would be, to give him another daughter, whose natural endowments were not much inferior to those of Miss O'Hara, and whose accidental ones the world rated very high indeed.

"I could but wish the noble Delaval happy with this lady," concluded Mr. Meredith; "I did so most sincerely." Honoria tried to echo the wish; — but though her heart said it fervently, her pale lips refused to utter it. As she continued sitting, tears silently dropping from her downcast eyes over her clasped hands, Mr. Meredith looked at her with

genuine compassion. Conscious that she suffered as much from the conviction of her own criminal pride, as from the bereavement of every hope through Fitz Arthur, he knew that although every word he spake fell on his own heart like scalding drops, every word ought to be spoken. Unless a most decided tone were used, while speaking of the rejected proposal, Mr. Meredith just knew enough of the young heart to be certain Honoria's would cherish Fitz Arthur's image, and nurse (along with her contrition) improbable hopes, ultimately ruinous to her peace and prospects. The present, too, was an apt occasion, for enforcing a humbling sense of her own frail nature, upon the youthful penitent; teaching her, that watchfulness over herself, which she had ignorantly or arrogantly deemed unnecessary, because no circumstances had before this called her besetting sins into action.

To such serious commentaries, Honoria listened in trembling silence; deeply impressed by their awful import, while acknowledging their truth. She

believed she could now resign Fitz Arthur for ever without one rebellious murmur: — but never to regain his esteem, —never that of his father, — never that of his brother, — *that* was indeed a sacrifice to make to conscience. Yet it must be made; since she must not incur the blissful risk of reviving Fitz Arthur's late wishes, by letting any one of his family know her present regrets and agonized repentance.

After her uncle was gone, she waited a few seconds, until she heard his tread on the last step of the stairs. She then sank upon her knees, and with tears streaming over her convulsively-clasped hands, prayed for blessings on Fitz Arthur, and all he loved now, or might love hereafter. That *all* seemed, in her overwrought imagination, to be summed up in the person of Miss Clavering; and as she ran over in her thoughts the conversations she had held with that young lady, the character she had first heard of her, and the observations she had since made upon her manners, she felt a

mournful consolation in believing her indeed calculated to sweeten and embellish the existence of Delaval Fitz Arthur.

From the soothing of these meditations she was suddenly summoned by her aunt to assist in stringing beads, and plaiting up lace for the visit to Shafto Place: no court presentation ever employed more time and attention. As Honoria tried playfully to combat successive tasty additions to Mrs. Meredith's new satin gown, and still some fresh frippery starting up to be fought against, she secretly rejoiced that she was spared the mortification of dining in Miss Clavering's company with such a relation by her side. Human infirmity yet shrunk from whatever pain it could avoid.

The morning of the dinner day arrived. With its meridian sun, the equestrian party from Monksden and St. Cuthberts were heard prancing up to the slovenly gate of the fore court.

The cheerful voices of the gay cavalcade reached Honoria, as she sat fancy-

ing herself reading. She looked out of the window, and saw at the gate the two Misses Clavering, Jane, and Major Stanhope, Mr. Mulcaster, and Sophia. By the time she was down stairs, they were off their horses, and making their laughing way up to the house, in defiance of half a dozen half-grown porkers, that were running grunting about in search of the hedge-gap through which they had entered.

Into the house, however, the party got at last. Never had a more able diversion been made by an auxiliary general, than was done by the six pigs, for it enabled Mrs. Meredith not only to scud past Honoria to get herself and dirty gown out of sight, but gave her time to vent her resentment at fine folks, who were always taking liberties; — coming at such out-of-the-way hours to pay visits!

Never before had Mrs. Meredith's voice sounded musically in our heroine's ear. With a revived spirit she hastened to the parlour, which with provident second sight of this visit, she had herself

just filled with pots of newly gathered flowers. The rudest room is embellished by these natural ornaments: and Honoria was conscious too, that by their grouping, she had masked certain disorderly corners; especially the quarter of cupboards. This quarter was ever her abhorrence: for there Mrs. Meredith collected every species of litter, and rarely suffered the doors of these offensive magazines to be kept shut. It was now branched over by actual boughs of lilac and rose acacia.

Greetings and gladness followed Honoria's entrance. Every individual had something kind to say, of welcome and friendly compliment: she could unfeignedly compliment each of them in return, for exercise and exhilaration had enriched every cheek. Even Miss Clavering's had unwonted bloom on it, though her eye was heavy, and her movements listless. Honoria forgot herself with gazing on her. — She wondered why Miss Clavering looked dejected! — What she would give, to know whether she were

suffering for Fitz Arthur, or from her first attachment!—How sad it would be were the excellent Fitz Arthur to have but half a heart given him after all!

Major Stanhope's happy accents, chiding her for looking ill, first roused her: she woke up to answer him. He was unusually animated; for his day of blessing was fixed, and the joy of his heart made him nearly as voluble as his fair partner. Dora and William, still playing as it seemed at flirtation, were robbing Honoria's flower-pots for each other; launching, meanwhile, their little bolts of alternate banter and flattery; or insisting upon Honoria's listening to their very different accounts of a sketching party to which they had belonged the previous day.

They had been to a picturesque reach of the Eden, whither William had not only loaded himself with their sketch books, pencils, India-rubber, &c., but had gratified the ladies by making a series of drawings, which he pronounced most faithful representations of what he saw

before him; but which the perverse Dora persisted in declaring, were actually drawings of some new heaven and new earth; threatening to preserve them all her life, as specimens of Mr. Mulcaster's felicitous talents as an artist. With the prettiest ridicule of look and language, she described these admirable sketches to Honoria; whilst William stood listening in perfect submission, satisfied that she was talking of him, whatever were her strain; and that she suffered him to know, she meant to preserve his rapid penciling. Honoria, as she looked on them both, thus thoughtlessly enjoying the present hour, felt as if *her* days of youthful illusion were gone; so abiding was the memory of her uncle's admonitions, and of her own erring fancies.

The entrance of Mr. Meredith gave momentary check to the uncontrolled spirits of the lively ones; and in conversation with him, Honoria heard that Delaval Fitz Arthur was ill, and that the Major meant therefore to send Wil-

liam home with the ladies, while he should ride round by Arthur's Court, to enquire particulars. Fitz Arthur was said to have a bilious fever.

Miss Clavering's troubled expression of countenance was now explained: a glance from Jane's eye denoted that she attributed this fever to Fitz Arthur's despair, and Honoria's altered cheeks to pure compassion. Mr. Meredith having warmly entered into the anxiety expressed by Major Stanhope, gladly accepted his offer of sending his groom back from Arthur's Court to say how far the account of Fitz Arthur's illness might have been exaggerated by servants and tradespeople.

With equal consideration for his niece, Mr. Meredith hinted that they had better relieve their joint fears as speedily as possible; and continuing to urge that, while William clamoured gaily at his incivility, he obliged the party to abridge their visit, and be gone.

Immediately on their departure, having, with his usual softness of nature, said

a few quieting words, he gave Honoria the useful employment of seeking out Scripture texts for him; this occupied her attention in some degree until Major Stanhope's groom returned with the account that Fitz Arthur was indeed confined to his bed, but not in positive danger.

Mr. Meredith put the little slip of paper on which this was pencilled into Honoria's hand, telling her she might now leave him, as he concluded she must think of getting ready for her dinner at Ravenshaw. With a full though calmed heart, she thanked him, and retired.

Ere she attempted making her own careless toilet, she assisted at that of her aunt, to whose frequent angry bursts and unfeminine modes of denouncing each refractory riband or pricking pin, she had no longer her wonted gaiety to oppose. She was utterly incapable of affecting that playful wilfulness which she often found to be the very best way of bearing down opposition, without irritating the opponent by convincing him of his error.

She could only bear Mrs. Meredith's violence, not endeavour to avert it; though her very silent submission, and look of tearful dejection drew upon her fresh bursts of wonder and sharp reproach.

After exhausting her niece's spirits and her own stock of finery, Mrs. Meredith at length issued from her chamber one mass of bad taste and gaudy apparel. In truth she was quite worthy of the old green chariot with its orange-coloured hammer-cloth, (furnished by the Unicorn, as a magnificent indemnity for a postchaise,) in which she and her sighing husband jolted off to Shafto Place. As the carriage from Ravenshaw drove up to the gate, the damask roses which Honoria was twisting through her dark hair, seemed to mock the cheeks that so lately had mocked their richest blush. She cared not now how she looked: therefore merely folding that shining hair round her head, and crossing it over her brow, (the roses braided in its mass behind,) her head assumed the air of an antique statue's.

Her pale beauty became her therefore; yet what availed it? she was only going to meet Lord Francis Fitz James, for Mr. Mulcaster had spoken of him as still lingering at Ravenshaw. She recollected the time when the idea of such a meeting would have made her heart beat; simply because it excited her imagination; already excited by the indiscreet representations and auguries of young persons as romantic and silly as herself: and she remembered at the same moment, Mrs. Preston's former assurances, when speaking of her unconscious predilection for Fitz Arthur, "that she might be in the deep water without knowing it." Again she felt an humbled sense of her past presumption and obstinacy: — again she felt, that had she cultivated a more respectful opinion of the value of plain sense, and a less arrogant notion of glittering capacities, she might have been spared the misfortune of having slighted Mrs. Preston's warning, and the infatuation of believing that she was to find superhuman perfection in a man who

could write verses. Pensively revolving thus her own errors, she arrived at Ravenshaw.

The Countess apologized for having no other company; saying she had wished to have had her quite to herself; but Lord Francis Fitz James was not gone, and would of course prevent their having a *tête-à-tête* dinner. However, he generally rambled about directly after that meal; so Miss O'Hara must resign herself to a dull, or quiet evening, whichever she pleased to term it.

The very mention of such dulness, was enough to put a depressed person in spirits; it is such a joy to be told you need not exert yourself when your whole spirit has been loathing the necessity for exertion! Honoria's enchantment of smile and eye-sparkle reappeared for the moment in which she welcomed this intelligence. Lady Wearmouth was well pleased to see her unchagrined by the information.

Lord Francis and the dinner came in together. Although Honoria had not for-

gotten the fine person of Lord Francis, she had thought so little of it, since a subject of deeper interest possessed her mind, that when he entered, she looked at him with just such an expression of countenance and emotion of admiration, as she would have displayed had she come unawares upon the statue of the Belvidere Apollo: and she did so with an emotion as purely admiring, and free from all idea of His Lordship except as a piece of noble workmanship, as though he had indeed been hewn out of marble.

There was, in truth, something startlingly beautiful in the pale polish, and perfect contour, of Lord Francis's features: their forms so finely rounded; their character so sadly still! Such forms announced youth and health; yet the glow of health and the vividness of youth were wanting. — There was evidently some canker-worm within.

Honoria deeply impressed with this conviction, answered his courteous enquiries in a tone of such softness from the commiseration she felt for him, that

the young idol of fashion might have been pardoned for a momentary throb of gratified vanity. But Lord Francis was just as little inclined as herself, luckily, for throbs and thrills unconnected with subjects of greater interest than transient admiration inspired by his own good looks, and he resumed conversation as he would have done it with her uncle.

Under the roof of Ravenshaw, Lord Francis appeared as if he had thrown off a disguise: he was natural and even in his manner; there was no such alternation of pointed attention, and sudden neglect, as had hitherto marked his conduct with her: he indulged in no extravagant opinions; no revolting arrogance of look; no superciliousness in his remarks: had she now seen him for the first time she would have pronounced him deeply interesting. But she checked this glow by remembering that there were no persons by to draw forth his faults and shadow his best qualities.

Lady Wearmouth evidently disliked

the discussion of county gossip, therefore led conversation to matters of taste and local interest. Books and foreign lands were talked of: Honoria's originality of thought, and often brilliant illustrations, pleased Her Ladyship much; accompanied as they were by modest pauses, and by sudden recollection of her own imagined temerity in uttering them. Lord Francis was evidently interested by the conversation, for he quitted the dining-room with the ladies, loitering with them over his coffee, in the drawing-room, till past sunset.

Lady Wearmouth and Honoria seated themselves in the recess of a window, whence they admired the glorious panoply of clouds under which the sun was sinking. Lord Francis stood leaning against the drapery of the curtain, his pale features finely relieved by its dark crimson colour; and his brow fitfully illuminating by the sun-gleams as he fronted their momentary blaze. None of the party seemed inclined to talk.

When the last ray went out on the

bosom of the little stream of the Eden, ere its wooded banks sunk under their deepest, saddest shade, Lady Wearmouth's pensive voice broke the silence reigning around.

"This is just a moment to wish for music; and such music as you can give us, Lord Francis, above all others.—May I ask you to oblige me with a note or two of what that setting sun must have inspired!—we all know that you think in music as well as verse."

The shadow of a colour (for so vanishing a hue scarcely deserved a stronger epithet,) quivered on and passed away from Lord Francis's cheek, at this request. "Of all moments, perhaps," he said, with a distressful smile, "this is the last on which I should feel prompted to sing, or say any thing, except farewell, comprehensive farewell!—but a wish of yours, dearest madam!"—and before Lady Wearmouth could beseech him not to constrain himself, he had startled Honoria as much by the power of his music as he had done by the effect of his person.

It was not voice, it was not science, it was not execution, which made the charm of such singing. The voice was of limited compass, though exquisitely sweet; the notes chosen to express the singer's feeling, few, and slightly varied; but these seemed breathing from the very depths of the heart, coming as sighs do from the unhappy in solitude, as if unconsciously, and telling of actual suffering. The air (almost self-composed) was one to linger in the memory, and be inseparable there, from the images of things now present. With every one of its melancholy notes must henceforth be associated the remembrance of those saddening clouds, those still woods, that lapsing water, and the countenance of the singer.

The words, like the music, being things of a moment's creation, were in themselves inconsequent, — the manner was every thing. Honoria was affected by their meaning, as believing they shadowed out the state of Lord Francis's mind. They were these: —

" What though joy's sun be set
In yon sad west for ever;
Soft mem'ry's orb may yet
Shed light on life's dark river.

" On then, time-wasted flood!
If her sweet ray shine o'er thee,
Heed not the shades that brood,
And darken all before thee!"

With the last line of thrilling melody and smothered pathos, Lord Francis raised himself from his resting-place of the crimson curtain; gracefully wished Miss O'Hara good evening; saying he was now going to take his usual nightly ramble, and should see her no more, as he started for London the next day, whence he hoped soon to get upon the Continent.

Honoria naturally asked, if His Lordship were venturing upon a tour through countries then the seat of war. " O no, I go to be employed," was the answer. " I have been idle too long. — Much, much time is to be redeemed by me." — He stopped some evidently flowing feeling by adding hastily, " Nothing is more

foolish than for a man to talk of himself; once more, good night." He bowed on the hand he slightingly pressed, though quite respectfully; and telling Lady Wearmouth he should expect to find her despatches for town on his table when he returned from his ramble, retired from the room.

As he shut the door Lady Wearmouth said in a maternal tone, "That is a fine creature, cruelly injured by extravagant and injudicious admiration! A variety of pleasing talents, all pleasing, but not one great in itself, has been lauded up to him from his earliest years, till they have made him fancy himself privileged to exact what no rational man ever would exact. Expecting a sort of blind faith in his integrity, and an irrational devotion to his peculiarities, which none of earthly mould may dare to challenge, he has actually murdered his own happiness, by insisting upon such blind idolatry as a proof of genuine affection."

Honoria ventured only to look her desire of explanation. Lady Wearmouth

resumed, " He was once greatly attached to a lady, from whom he broke, because she would not defy her friends and marry him: and her friends demurred only, because he would not explain something in his conduct which appeared most unfavourable, (and he could have satisfactorily explained it;)—so his haughty spirit took umbrage at the supposed insult of being doubted by the relations, and not worshipped by the young lady. Lord Francis's faults are all great ones: — his sin, is that which cost the rebellious angels Heaven. He is now only beginning to apprehend the Christian doctrine, which commands the utter uprooting of proud self-will: in time I hope to see him under the right religious influence."

" Has he then no religion?" Honoria enquired, her feeling of interest recoiling.

Lady Wearmouth explained. Lord Francis had the religion of mere feeling, of strong momentary impulse: but it was one made up out of his own brilliant fancies; incapable, therefore, of guiding

him through the perils of life, or of supporting him under its sorrows; and when he could bring himself to renounce this, and seek the real guide of Scripture, (which she thought by one casual conversation with him the day before, he was actually about to aim at,) she firmly believed he would become a useful and a happier man.—"If he does not seek instruction there," she added, with a benevolent sigh, "he may indeed by dint of reason, find out that no man has a right to demand the sacrifice of a principle, as a proof of attachment; he may recover the esteem of those who knew and lamented his former obstinate pride, but his own happiness, never! Aided only by such imperfect, visionary piety as I have described, and being one of those musing, imaginative characters, upon whom a disappointed attachment fixes, he will be too likely to slacken his present good purposes of activity and usefulness, and relapse into selfish indulgence.—I mean the indulgence of personal regrets. However, against this fear, I oppose the hope, that he will be

influenced at last by the Spirit of Truth; of what we old-fashioned people, in spite of new philosophers, persist in calling the grace of God. Hitherto, Lord Francis's poetical religion has been wholly unlike that Christianity which inculcates humility in ourselves, charity towards others, and submission to our God. No heart, my dear Miss O'Hara, governed by such principles, can be long proud, contemptuous, or abandoned to selfish repining. The Christian may indeed often sorrow; but never, never like them that have no hope."

Lady Wearmouth's eyes and voice while she spoke, testified that her heart had known as much of that sorrow, as may be compatible with a firm persuasion, that every earthly trial is ordained for our ultimate good. While she sunk into temporary silence, Honoria had time to collect her thoughts. She was at once surprised and enlightened by the Countess's remarks upon Lord Francis: they were equally applicable to Honoria's own character and conduct.

Her sin had been pride and obstinate error; and even now, until this very moment, she had fancied that to nurse some secret grief through life, was not a sin.

How inestimable is the instruction which enforces principles by the illustration of examples! — a mode of teaching taught us by Him, who spake divine truths under the form of parables! — With such an advantage given to her exhortations, Lady Wearmouth had done more real service to her young hearer in ten minutes, than had been done in the course of two years, by her revered uncle's unexperienced theories of life, even though aided by sincerely pious reasonings. Honoria was struck by this overturning of all her false notions, in the person of Lord Francis Fitz-James. In him were embodied her ideas of unrestrained sensibility, (once so admired by her,) coupled with the possession or the reputation of genius. What was the result? The one quality made him arrogant and unreasonable; the other kept himself wretched, while it laid waste the

happiness of those connected with him. Fitz Arthur, on the contrary, kind to the humblest intellect, lenient with the greatest offender, self-sacrificing, most anxious to strive for others' contentment when his own lay under shadow — Fitz Arthur, whom she had once estimated so lightly in comparison with this idol of her fancy, he, instead of yielding to the natural infirmity of disappointed passion, continued to diffuse blessings; striving to find consolation under suffering, in his "bounden duty."—But Fitz Arthur she well knew was a true, unostentatious Christian.

When Lady Wearmouth smilingly asked, if she were not deciding in her own mind that her monitress was a Methodist? Honoria's animated and grateful answer proved, that she knew and prized the difference between fanaticism and sober, deep-seated piety; then adding some compassionating remarks upon Lord Francis, she ended by saying, "I suppose the lady he loved has since married?"—"No; but I am told she is

on the point of marriage, with one every way worthy of her. On first hearing this, poor Lord Francis had all his stormiest passions roused; but they have since settled into a better feeling. He seems less angry at his former mistress, than displeased with himself; and certainly has taken steps to begin a new career. I do think the character of his successful rival has had a strong effect upon him. The last two or three years have been wasted by poor Francis, in vainly haunting and harassing the object of his attachment, to the neglect of all those duties, which his abilities fit him for performing ably: but he has now accepted a proposal from my son, of going out to Lord Malmesbury at Lisle, as an *attaché* to the embassy of negotiation; and, we trust, will consent to proceed afterwards in the discharge of public business. Some object he must have, for his energies to act on. How many times have I seen him trying to find it in a succession of minor pursuits, and new faces! The first of these have made

him what is called the fashion, and the idol of his mother, who prizes nothing *but* the fashion: the second has given him falsely the reputation of liking to be admired by women. Of this, however, I acquit him; being quite sure, that he has paid many a fine-looking young woman transient though vivid attention, solely from a feverish wish of detaching his proud heart from its first disappointed attachment."

These few words satisfactorily accounted to Honoria for all Lord Francis's apparent caprices in his behaviour to her. He had then wished to do more than admire her: and had worthily stopped short, ere the experiment could have affected her future peace. Such conduct demanded her approbation, and she gave it. But new and strange fancies began shaping themselves in her mind, so that she scarcely heard the Countess, when, after a short silence, she laid aside her knitting, and asked her if her father had not once been a captain in the —— regiment.

The question was asked in the gentlest tone of apprehensive kindness; a tone Lady Wearmouth always used, when speaking of the dead to their surviving friends; yet Honoria started, as she replied in the affirmative. How were her surprise and emotion increased, when she learnt, that a certain treasure-elephant, belonging to Hyder Ally Cawn, had been captured by a division of that regiment during the recent war in India; that a Captain O'Hara was one of the captors; and that his share, if his claims were substantiated, would amount to £10,000 or £15,000!

Hitherto, the proper allotment of this prize had been left unsettled amongst the numerous others of the Rohilla war; but the commission for examining into, and settling such claims, was now drawing to a close; and Lord Wearmouth having some share in it, was ready to undertake bringing forward that of Honoria, provided she would furnish him with the proper documents and testimonials for her claiming in right of her fa-

ther. Honoria's first feeling upon having all this detailed to her, was akin to affliction: for he, through whom she was to acquire fortune, lay a heap of ashes in the distant land where his services had earned it! — but drying her eyes, after a long gush of filial tears, she answered Lady Wearmouth to the best of her ability.

She could remember, though "dim and undistinguishably," having heard her great aunt speak of this possible good fortune: — nay, she was sure she had a letter of her father's, in which the capture of the treasure-elephant was described. As he had died when all was confused and uncertain, and she not of an age to enter into matters of business, little mention of the circumstance had occurred afterwards in his few letters home: thus it had gone from her memory; and she believed was quite unknown, or unreflected on, by her uncle at Edenfell. She could, however, place all her father's correspondence in Lady Wearmouth's hands, as well as the registers of her

mother's marriage, her own birth, &c. These were sufficient documents; and with these Honoria promised to furnish the Countess, who was to go from Ravenshaw to her son's house at Roehampton on the next or the ensuing day. As, however, the Rohilla affairs were not positively wound up, and there was yet a question of whether the treasure-elephant was to be considered as belonging to its few captors, or to the whole brigade employed in the particular service then going forward, Honoria ventured to pray that no publicity might be given to so doubtful a piece of good fortune. She wished to avoid the pain of ridicule if disappointed, or the charge of eager boasting when successful. Lady Wearmouth granted the cogency of these reasons.

Honoria then proceeded to express her gratitude for the interest taken in her by such illustrious friends. She was so much agitated by unexpected pleasure, and lively thankfulness, that

Lady Wearmouth, solicitous to change the subject, said something of the current report about Miss Clavering and the heir of Arthur's Court; adding to her encomiums upon the filial and fraternal virtues of the latter, an expression of rejoicing that so admirable a person should find money and merit united in the woman whom circumstances induced him to marry.

"You gaze on me, Miss O'Hara," she continued smiling, "as though I had uttered a heresy; but by the time you are my age, you will understand these necessities, and not undervalue the person who submits to them from conscientious motives. Doubtless you have yet to be convinced that a private gentleman is sometimes as imperiously commanded by circumstances to resign the object of his affections, as princes are to take a wife out of regard for public welfare. My dear lord's was a case in point. I was born the daughter of a plain country gentleman; my father's property joined that of his father; — we

therefore met often, and he began to like me — more than like me! — But the Wearmouth estates, never large enough for an earldom, had been previously wasted by other lords; and my dear husband had several brothers and sisters to be portioned: he saw that he could not *afford* to marry a young woman with a moderate fortune; he felt that his duties as the heir, demanded the sacrifice of inclination; and ere the affection rose beyond his mastery, he got permission to travel: sincerely purposing to use every virtuous means of forgetting me, and trying to like some other well-principled woman with sufficient fortune to ensure a provision for their children. Then came my golden shower; for by the accidental death of a male relation in the prime of life, I became the mistress of three centred properties. My lord returned; told me all that I now tell you; and with double love, double reverence for him in consequence, I became his wife: never was wife happier!" Lady Wearmouth paused to overcome certain

softening remembrances, then resumed: "Assuredly this must sound sadly worldly in your inexperienced ear, my dear young friend; but it is the duty of age to awaken the attention of youth to every one of its possible mistakes. You have a long portion of life before you; and when a few more years are gone, you will have found that it is impossible for a well-disposed mind to retain the bewildering romance of young hearts, longer than while itself remains ignorant of their ineffectual struggles against ordinations and duties. I am zealous over much, too!" she added with a little laugh, "defending Captain Fitz Arthur to one who did not accuse him! — for in truth these general reflections have grown out of my displeasure at hearing it insinuated by some invidious persons, that he is going to marry Miss Clavering entirely for her money, to redeem Sir Everard's prodigality, — a thing which, if it were partly true, according to *my* theory, would redound to his credit."

Honoria knew not how to answer: the conversation seemed to have arisen accidentally; yet it was possible that Lady Wearmouth had seized the opportunity of thus destroying every vision of future greatness connected with the idea of Lord Francis Fitz James, or of happiness with Delaval Fitz Arthur, in which her visitant might have indulged. Mrs. Shafto's serpent tongue might have been employed here. Shaping her reply accordingly, Honoria took infinite pains to convince the Countess that her youthful heart looked for no higher destiny than a village home and a state of singlehood. Her manner was too sincere to be doubted; her gratitude too tearful a one, to be classed with ordinary feelings; the person she wished to convince of her freedom from all extravagant expectations, actually was persuaded that she had none; but penetrating deeper, guessed from her varying complexion as she spoke of Arthur's Court, that a hopeless sentiment for its estimable heir, had thus early taught her the rashness

of improbable hopes and imprudent wishes. Lady Wearmouth had however said as much upon delicate subjects as their recent acquaintance authorized; and when they parted, and Honoria received a gentle embrace of farewell, she went penetrated with a lively sense of a most benevolent purpose in her instructress. How did her heart glow to warnings thus given, to hints for conduct thus tenderly thrown out! — How sweetly did Lady Wearmouth's manner and language contrast with that of the person who pretended to be her copy! Lady Wearmouth was obviously as regretfully alive, as Mrs. Shafto joyfully was, to the obstacles which Honoria's peculiar situation cast in the way to her being seriously addressed by any man of high station, or of her being cordially received by the members of such a one's family: but Lady Wearmouth did not consider them as personally degrading the poor girl so situated; she sought to enlighten, not humiliate her; anxious to protect her from that after disap-

pointment of hope or heart, which is perpetually the fate of portionless ill-connected beauty. As such, Honoria felt gratitude follow conviction.

Then, she thought, what generous candour, what delicate equalizing of herself with her hearer, was there not in Lady Wearmouth's voluntary mention of her own original mediocrity! If any other proof had been wanting, that alone would have testified that Lady Wearmouth spoke solely from motives of benevolence; and even in her proudest day, Honoria would have been ready to prostrate herself before that divine principle.

The glow of these amiable feelings remained in our heroine's breast but awhile; as she drew homewards, it was gradually quenched by other thoughts connected with the lessons to which she had been attending. What Lady Wearmouth had laid down as a general rule for men of integrity to practise, Honoria applied to Fitz Arthur individually: — Lady Wearmouth's doctrine made it

almost impossible for him not to marry Miss Clavering. As that name remained vibrating in her mind, she paused on it, recalling all the wild entangled ideas and recollections which had crossed her that evening, concerning this young lady. There was something in the history of Lord Francis Fitz James as Lady Wearmouth had related it, which recalled that of Miss Clavering given by Fitz Arthur at his father's ball; something similar yet undefined in likeness: there were looks, tones, questions, evaded answers of both sisters and of Lord Francis himself, floating through her brain, conjuring up a set of wild, improbable hopes and wishes and anxieties. Could it be that Lord Francis was the person Miss Clavering was to have married! Could he be the selfishly impassioned lover whom Fitz Arthur described as disdaining defence of himself when accused of being a gamester, and persecuting Miss Clavering to sin against her first duties! — Was she then the woman for whom he was now renouncing his

country, in the conviction that all hope of regaining her affection was ended! He must have attempted softening her again, and must have failed: if so, then the assurance of Fitz Arthur's probable marriage with the lovely heiress was made doubly sure.

Honoria could doubt no further. — Farewell, then, to such bright visions as had suddenly gladdened her when Lady Wearmouth astonished her with opening the prospect of a fortune before her! That fortune might enable her to purchase comforts for others, but for herself it could never now buy one hour of happiness. Thus thought, thus felt an inexperienced creature of eighteen, of warm affections and precipitate judgment: yet one too, that had just been assenting to the doctrine that we must live for duties; therefore, must conscientiously strive for grace to conquer every passion which might obstruct our performance of them!

But at eighteen we do not quickly act upon our best convictions: in truth they

are rarely then of an abiding nature. Honoria weeping over her own desolated life could now deeply pity Lord Francis; for now she could fancy many excuses for every thing in his manner which had either displeased or disappointed her. She wondered how Miss Clavering, now entirely mistress of herself and fortune, and conscious of still reigning over his heart, could have the Roman virtue to persist in giving him up: she could not do so, unless her affections had changed their object! Honoria sighed as she decided this; then thought what a strange sympathy there was between her situation and that of Lord Francis Fitz James: both had forfeited happiness and preference by their own fault; both perished through their pride. In one thing however Lord Francis had the advantage,—he could go from the country where Agnes Clavering was lost to him: Honoria must find *her* fixed home, close to the paradise of honour and happiness in which Fitz Arthur and his wife would dwell. That idea was indeed afflicting; and in pursuing it she ceased to feel

gratitude for the substantial blessing in prospect, the means of living independently as a single woman, and of exercising liberality. From such reflections she was only roused by finding herself at home. Mr. and Mrs. Meredith had not returned. Conscious that her tears had been indulged too freely for her eyes to bear even her uncle's mild scrutiny, she hastened to her room, where she prevented Hetty Macready's remarks upon those heavy-looking eyes, by hastily declining all attendance, and retreating into solitude.

Ere our heroine could resolve upon seeking sleep, restless feeling prompted her to look again at those stanzas in Lord Francis Fitz James's little volume, which had formerly been the object of Fitz Arthur's close attention and subsequent animadversions.

Believing herself now in possession of that key to its meaning, which was then wanting to her, but known to him, she read with newly awakened interest these tediously personal verses: —

" TO *****.

THAT wasted form, pale cheek, and tearful eye,
May wring this heart, but hope shall wake no more:
Looks are but faithless signs, when facts deny
Their tender seeming, found so false before.

'Tis mockery — or worse! What, grieve to see
Thy victim perishing, when thou canst save!
What! love the thing, whom one kind word from thee
Would snatch at once from misery and the grave!

No! dearer to thy soul, life's idle glare
Of pomp and place, and pleasure idler still;
Dearer than he, who would unshrinking share
With thee each hard variety of ill.

Thou'rt free to choose; and competence is mine —
Enough, with love, for dear domestic joy;
Enough full many a heart beloved to twine
With every blest protecting social tie:

Enough for honour, elegance, and ease;
But nought for splendor, nought for vain acclaim.
And can thy virgin heart think only these
Are worth the manly heart's aspiring flame?

Think'st thou ambition's throb can e'er supply
A tear so pure, so sacred, and so sweet,
As fills the husband's and the father's eye,
When wife and child in his embraces meet?

Think'st thou the stern design high Heaven approves,
To waste thy days in sterile singleness;
Because life's stir he shuns who fondly loves,
Or that fear tells thee, *Cares at last may press*?

Think'st thou 'tis reason or heroic will,
So to lay waste the spring time of thy youth;
Sowing no seed thy winter stores to fill
With the rich harvest of long-serviced truth?

When time hath changed thee, and the world no more
Can charm thy senses, or awake thy heart,
Wilt thou not wish thou couldst again go o'er
Thy vanish'd life and seize a better part?

When that fine cord is loosed which binds ye all,
And one blest life hath reached its earthly goal,
When heaven and bliss their sweet companion call,
And all but thee have found their partner soul,

Wilt thou not sigh, unheeded and alone,
Thinking of him, then haply laid at rest;
Long for some heart to make thy pains its own,
And ask the pillow of one faithful breast?

Yes! thou wast formed for what thou spurnest now;
For highest duties, as for simplest joys:
For friendship's bond, for wedlock's hallowed vow,
And all a parent's holiest extasies.

Some erring vision of fantastic right,
Leads thee to sacrifice such pure desire,
Blinds with its meteor-glare thy dazzled sight,
And bids fond wishes in the blaze expire.

But nature scorn'd, her late revenge will take;
In shape of vain regret her wrath will come;
And him, whom now thy plighted vows forsake,
Thy Heart shall follow to the lonely tomb."

Even during the perusal of these stanzas, Honoria remembered the sudden change which had taken place in Lord Francis Fitz James, after their latest conversation at the officers' fête. At the time she had attributed this to affectation; but she now justly believed it must have been produced by Lady Henderson's mention of the Misses Clavering. He must have heard, then, for the first time, that he was likely to meet this beloved though dreaded object at Monksden the next day.

Doubly assured from this recollection, Honoria laid aside the book, perfectly convinced, that although the writer might intend to introduce the verses into a romance as William Mulcaster averred, they must originally have been the product of private feeling. She could no longer doubt that they were addressed to Miss Clavering: and remembering all that Fitz Arthur and Lady Wearmouth had said, of that exemplary young woman's sufferings, she now almost shared in the former's expressed

resentment, against the publication of such a poem.

There was an unfairness in the representation of their mutual situations, and in the statement of poor Agnes's reasons for refusing to yield to his solicitations, which could not fail of lowering Lord Francis in Honoria's estimation: she thought too, that he might have spared the prophecy of Mrs. Clavering's death; — a mother, so dear, so valuable, — an only parent! — Honoria sighed then to think, how one powerful passion, indulged without restraint, may lay waste the finest qualities of the soul, and changing from the most generous to the most selfish of human affections, cease to deserve any other tribute, than Christian compassion for its criminal and afflictive excess.

With a very much moderated degree of pity therefore, or rather with less of sympathy for the erring, ill-instructed Lord Francis, Honoria slowly undressed herself; then laid her throbbing head upon a sleepless pillow.

CHAP. III.

VERY different scenes had been exhibiting where Mr. and Mrs. Meredith were among the performers. All there was curtsies and compliments, pomp and emptiness. Mr. Shafto's dinners ever "gave to airy nothing, a local habitation and a name;" for they were as unsubstantial and unsatisfactory as the great lady who inspected the bills of fare. But the table glittered with gilt plate, the servants with gold lace, and the scantiness of the wines was atoned for by their high-sounding titles.

Nothing could be more critically exact than the poise of numbers, and the attention to precedence in seating the company at table. They mustered twenty-two persons: four ladies and three gentlemen from St. Cuthberts; one gentleman and three ladies from Monksden; Sir

Thomas and Lady Sykes; the humbler pair from the Rectory; the master and mistress of the mansion, with two of their daughters; and by way of pleasing garnish, Colonel Mason, Mr. Tudor, and Mr. Spratt.

By the greedy appetite with which the latter youngling swallowed every flattery, and seemed from mere self-love inclined to exalt the flatterer, William Mulcaster decided he must have been created on purpose for the Shafto family. While the party were marshalling by Mr. Shafto, who piqued himself upon having *at last* got all the rules of precedency by heart, some one observed after they were seated, that Mr. Shafto evidently favoured the system of a balance of power, there being precisely eleven ladies and eleven gentlemen. Colonel Mason gallantly begged leave to deny that there could be equality of power, wherever ladies were parties concerned. Mr. Spratt with equal felicity and facetiousness remarked, "by bringing forward the fair sex, the honourable member was de-

parting from his avowed and sound political principles, and raising up an opposition."

"And is not the best constitution we know, balanced by an opposition?" enquired Mr. Mulcaster, half superciliously.

"*They* say so;" smartly rejoined Mr. Spratt, settling his chin consequentially in the deep nest of his neckcloth. "Pray forgive me, ladies, but the opposition, like the fair, are *talkers*, and —"

"I know how you will end that incomparable witticism," William abruptly said; then rather imitating the other's tone, "And though the cackling of geese once saved the Capitol, —" an authoritative look from his father checked his inconsiderate and intemperate manner, of which he was himself instantly ashamed. There was the pause of a moment round the table; for every body saw by Mr. Mulcaster's face that he was provoked, yet no one could guess why; and one little heart stopt its gay pulsation, with quick fear of a duel.

Mr. Spratt, however, taking the complimentary term in good earnest, and

infinitely delighted with that which was announced to be spoken in his spirit, laughed immoderately though affectedly; exclaiming as he rapped his snuff-box, "Excellent! capital! uncommonly good!" Mr. Spratt's whole offence consisted in being seated next to Dora Clavering, and eyeing her with too fixed a gaze. In truth his cogitations were very harmless; he was not admiring the swan-like form and whiteness of her graceful throat, but mistaking a very small dark mole there for a black patch; and concluding, therefore, that patches were coming into fashion.

After dinner, Mr. Shafto did not detain the male part of his company longer at table, than was just sufficient for him to tell the history of his pines, and of the various great cellars through which his claret and burgundy had passed ere it reached him. During such important narrations, of course the unreverential acts of eating and drinking were suspended; the gentlemen ascended therefore to the drawing-room, with some eagerness for coffee and conversation.

Mrs. Shafto was then going her round of blandishments through the little circle: Miss Shafto was playing off the stale game, of praising evidently affectionate sisters to each other, as she coldly endeavoured to imitate her mother's unction of dissimulation with the Misses Clavering.—Miss Augusta was disdainfully suffering Mrs. Meredith to remark, "What a great beau that young Mr. Spratt was, the finest gentleman she had ever seen, and how much he seemed smitten with Miss Augusta?"—Mrs. Meredith had quickness enough to see upon what points a person liked to be flattered; and Miss Augusta was beginning to have that agreeable sweetmeat so rarely applied to herself, that her taste as to its quality was rapidly losing niceness.

Mrs. Shafto's first caresses were bestowed upon the heiress, repeating what she had once heard her pleasant relative Delaval Fitz Arthur say of her, that she was a white rose of the gentlest fragrance. Mrs. Shafto marvelled, that no acknow-

ledging blush coloured that spotless rose, while she insinuated the compliment. Miss Clavering only gave her a smile without meaning or purpose; and relapsing into her usual silence, left the lady to blunder open lamentations about Fitz Arthur's illness. William Mulcaster thought she had made a happy choice of subject, provided Miss Clavering cared much for him, who was spoken of as *in great danger.*

From the heiress, Mrs. Shafto glided up to Mr. Meredith, (for whose wife's slip-slops at table, she had found complacent indulgence,) and overwhelmed him with civilities. Mr. Mulcaster could not guess for some time what this meant; till he heard her say that her daughter, who went to Yorkshire from the officers' races, was quite struck with the fine old mansion of his cousin Mr. Meredith of Thoresby; describing it as the most perfect specimen of the real English gentleman's residence, which she had ever seen. As Mr. Meredith duly declined such high praise for his forefather's abode,

the able mother added, " This feeling might be exaggerated, perhaps, by the raised state of her spirits. Matilda was so pleased with Yorkshire living, and she thought Mr. Meredith of Thoresby one of the most agreeable open-hearted persons in the county. Of course Mr. Meredith went sometimes to visit this very pleasant cousin; he must have taken Mrs. Meredith there to show her the patrimonial residence; a man of an ancient family had a right to be proud of Family !" Mr. Meredith simply answered in the negative; secretly surprised that a fox-hunting squire of forty-five, who was always joking rather coarsely about choosing a wife, yet never sought one, could be so agreeable to a fine young lady. William Mulcaster saw the aim at once; and from a certain gratifying modulation of voice, as Mrs. Shafto condescended to lament the pre-engagement of Miss O'Hara that day, he gathered further, that Mrs. Shafto was reduced to hope she saw in her a future cousin of the future mistress of Thoresby, and

probably the chosen bride of the eccentric Lord Francis Fitz James.

Both these possibilities or probabilities certainly did actuate Mrs. Shafto, and now that her daughter might receive reflected lustre from a Lady Francis Fitz James, she could fawn upon the obscure Miss O'Hara: nay, pardon her for what would else have been unpardonable, — adhering to any engagement when invited to Shafto Place.

"Our spectral hostess has plenty on her hands just now:" said William, stooping to his sister Henrietta's ear, "managing matches for her three daughters; didn't you hear her talking at table of THE Governor every now and then? — that's Tudor's uncle, who has just got the government of some little Botany Bay, in the Pacific or Terrific Ocean." Without staying for a reply, he moved away, and betook himself to watch for an opportunity of getting at Dora Clavering, who had contrived to ensconce herself so completely behind Colonel Mason, Mr. Tudor, the ridiculous Mr.

Spratt, and the loud, rattling Sir Thomas Sykes, that at first he could not approach her, and at length he would not.

The Dean, who was no indifferent spectator of these manœuvres, or of his son's consequent gloom; and being naturally a little of William's irritable temper, drew near the line of circumvallation without attempting to cross it.

Whether the grave aspect with which he stood looking on, were real or assumed, the lively Dora staid not to consider, but breaking at once away from the harmless gallantries of Colonel Mason, and the vociferous laughter of the jovial Sir Thomas, she staid her light step by the Dean's side.

"Your servant, young lady!" he said dryly, "many thanks for my entertainment. A prettier performance of complicated coquetry, with so many jarring instruments to manage, I never witnessed withal. — One, however, would not be played upon. — You must have had an able instructress."

Dora's little heart beat with brief

anger at this implied censure of her mother, and she replied with spirit, "The merit as yet is all my own, sir: — my mother gave me other lessons."

"Say you so!" rejoined the Dean, his countenance clearing. "You must have great natural genius; but all you women are geniuses in the line of first pleasing and then provoking us men. But something better I am now sure you have:" he added emphatically, seeing the brief eye-blaze quenched in tears: "a heart, which not even an old man like me, can pain without being sincerely sorry for it." He pressed her hand as he spoke. "But why have you sent my poor boy to Coventry?"

Dora blushed in pleased confusion, as she answered, that indeed she had a quarrel with Mr. Mulcaster, for she had detected him that very morning coaxing little Eliza Henderson to steal a glove for him; and it was so very wrong to corrupt a child even in jest, that she was determined to let him know she thought so! Dora did not add, that she feared

he was presuming upon her favours to him, and that she meant him to observe she could talk and laugh with others besides himself.

"Oh, if such has been his crime," cried the Dean, "I have not a word to offer in his defence; but here he comes, to say volumes, doubtless, for himself;" and moving away, the Divine yielded a passage to his son, to whom a glance from his eye had just given an excuse for crossing the room, towards his permanent attraction.

Dora secretly elated by his father's conduct, saluted him with "Well, Mr. Mulcaster, I must confess that you are much worse-looking when you are cross, than when you are in good-humour. I will hope, however, that I mistake contrition for crossness."

William never before knew that he was decidedly handsome. This speech amounted to a mathematical demonstration: and in the full splendour of conscious good looks, and the belief of possessing a partial judge, he entered

upon his defence about the glove. Dora was far from unappeasable; and very soon, the gay voices and joyous laughter of herself and her companion were heard in every pause of other discourse.

Much of this mirth was excited by the comic effect of a dialogue between Mrs. Meredith and Mr. Tudor, the pompous, learned, highly bred Mr. Tudor. William went across the room; loitering near them a moment or two, to catch bits of their colloquy, returning with them to Dora, and his sister Jane.

"What those two people would be worth on the stage!" he exclaimed in a stifled tone: "they are as good as any thing between King and Miss Pope. Just as I attained them, Mrs. Meredith was talking of her turban and the York waggon. Upon which Tudor begins: "Oh! York! it is a curious fact in history, Mrs. Meredith, of which you are perhaps not aware, that Constantine the Great (an Emperor of Rome, he who founded the city of Constantinople) assumed the purple in the city of York."

Mrs Meredith of course supposing he meant the Pope, lifted up her hands and eyes, devoutly exclaiming, "How shocking!"

Again William traversed the room to listen, and again returned. "If Tudor has not been cramming with Gibbon all day! — he had Constantine at York, just before, and now he has got a few pages on, and is curiously enquiring why persons when they talk of manly comeliness fail to notice the singular beauty of one Arintheus, a distinguished warrior during the joint reigns of Valens and Valentinian, anno domini six hundred and something. One who for his extraordinary felicity of formation, (don't you know Tudor's phrases?) was supposed to have been purposely created by the gods; surpassing Apollo, Adonis, Paris, Narcissus, Hyacinthus, &c. On he is going, his usual pace of solemn nonsense, as if he were schoolmaster general to the world."

"But that Mrs. Meredith!" interrupted his sister Jane, "what a woman!

did you hear her drinking healths all round, at dinner?"

"Yes, we all heard her," observed Stanhope smiling. "I felt for her husband: I am sure, Jane, I can never thank you sufficiently for having taken such pains to promote me to the honour of being allied to her."

"You dear wretch!" was all Jane answered.

"By the way," added her happy lover, "I have never thought to enquire if *you* have no vulgar aunt or uncle to quarter upon me hereafter."

"Yes!" abruptly ejaculated the mischievous William: "Isn't there the name of Mulcaster over a blacksmith's in Darlington? he's our cousin of course."

Jane gave Stanhope another sunny smile, and William a little stroke: the latter took himself off again to Mrs. Meredith's neighbourhood; then back again to his own party.

"He's coursing her quite through the reign of Valentinian," William whispered. "It is to be hoped he has

himself, got as far as the end of it; for then, if he knows how to handle the fellow's death, he may either send her out of this world after the same fashion, or give her a warning how to go on living in it! — I only wish Mr. Tudor were as dead sick of Gibbon and his familiar, Procopius, as I was, when I read him. Well! if I would have a tutor for *my* sons that takes the Decline and Fall, for his Bible! Every man to his fancy! — In my mind, a more pestilent pen than the said Mr. Gibbon's, never poisoned History. But Tudor is a stupid block."

"And thou art a man of most powerful prejudice!" exclaimed the Dean, who was again drawn into the sphere of Dora Clavering. "Poor Mr. Tudor studied at Cambridge, you at Oxford, therefore you maintain that he knows nothing beyond the calculation that two and two make four. I defy you, however, to puzzle him upon one historical point."

Put upon his mettle by this address, William advanced straight to Mr. Tudor,

and began the unexpected attack, by asking some classical question. This produced a sharp contest, which if it did not satisfy the unreasonable Oxford man, more than fulfilled the expectations of the fond father, who had been secretly anxious to display his son's best endowments before the young lady he felt inclined to wish for him as a wife.

Mr. Tudor was perfect in ancient history; but William, whose half romantic taste made him delight in the more varied period of the middle ages, fairly mastered him in the complicated mazes of chivalric institutions and Italian politics. Mr. Tudor was a calendar of successive dates and bare facts: his opponent evinced a superior power of bringing scattered facts into one point of view, and rallying them under one illustrative principle. In short, Mr. Tudor was driven to remark, that Mr. Mulcaster had evidently wasted much valuable time upon a broken skeleton, (meaning the Italian states,) when he might have contemplated the great

body, full and entire in the august empire of Rome! and rising at the call of Miss Shafto from another end of the room, he left the field to William.

William's family auditors were not sparing of their plaudits: inwardly gratified, he yet re-assumed his tone of levity, crying,

"'Much they admired, and much their wonder grew,
That one small head should carry all he knew!'

"You see, ladies, the beneficial effects of books and birch! When I come into parliament, sir," (turning to his father,) "I'll have an act passed, obliging every landed proprietor to plant birch along with oak: he shall not only grow it for his own family, but for that of such poor wretches as have not even a sprig flourishing in a garden-pot. Birch and oak, these are the trees of old England! Plant plenty of them, and you'll soon not see a gallows standing."

"So, during your administration," observed the Dean, "one half of our rogues are to be flogged out of their

faults; and the other half shipped off with them to our fleets! — The royal navy is infinitely indebted to your great scheme!"

Whilst William undertook his own vindication, Jane was actively promoting his interest with Dora Clavering. That young lady had merely given him a look of bashful approbation at first; then looked more boldly round, with woman's pride in the object of her preference. To his sister she spoke of him, as of Porson and Parr combined; wondering how such an idly busy person as he seemed, could come by so much information.

Jane assured her that William always made time to read, let him have ever so many other fancies: he read, she said, at nights and mornings; describing his very bed filled with volumes of all descriptions, proving that William was a greedy, desultory reader; one that was amassing ample materials: but whether he were one who would find leisure or

inclination for arranging them into a regular edifice of character and erudition (she allowed) remained to be proved. Dora Clavering was quite satisfied with the gentleman's character as it now stood; but she kept that opinion to herself.

"What a very clever, pleasing person Mr. Mulcaster is," observed Mrs. Shafto to the fat, contented Lady Henderson, by whom she was sitting. "I think you have seen a great deal of him lately." Mrs. Shafto's serpent tongue was forking itself.

Lady Henderson, insensible to the first gentle touch of the sting, remarked that they had indeed seen a good deal of Mr. William Mulcaster, and liked him every day more and more. Whilst he was constantly going to Hexham Castle they knew nothing of him; but now that he went amongst his other neighbours, they saw what he really was; one of the most obliging young men in the world: so very amusing! and so fond of children!

Mrs Shafto smilingly observed, that he did *not* go generally amongst his other neighbours, even yet: he was said to be as often at Monksden as he used to be at Hexham; at least so the officers told her, who missed him from their mess dinners.

Lady Henderson was still obtuse. "Yes, it was quite true: he was so partial to the children. Colonel Mason vowed Mr. Mulcaster was suborning one of the gipsies to steal Eliza for him: he was always bringing her little toys; and helping the boys to build; and nursing the baby: it was impossible to get tired of him, it showed such a good heart to be fond of children!" Mrs. Shafto saw that a breach here, was not practicable. Lady Henderson's eyes were sealed. Mrs. Shafto, therefore, glided away from her, to another quarter of her ghastly saloon, which by way of looking villa-like (though it stood north-east) was all French windows and open doors: then having made up two card-tables, she returned to the St. Cuthberts party.

Her softened sharp voice broke in on their mirth.

Miss Shafto "she begged leave to announce, had just prevailed for a little music. Lady Sykes was going to sing, and Mr. Tudor had obligingly offered his services. Would the delightful little coterie she was invading, adjourn to the music-room, or make up a round game?"

At the mere mention of cards, Mr. Mulcaster, giving his hand to Dora Clavering, precipitately hastened to the *Salle de Musique*.

Mr. Tudor was already there, opening and shutting books, displaying his paste hands, and paste ring, in a variety of lights. Miss Shafto was indolently receiving or seeming to disregard his attentions, yet still putting them in requisition; while adjusting the preliminaries necessary to all indifferent performances.

Lady Sykes, the Misses Shafto, and Mr. Tudor commenced, quavering and trilling tolerably well in tune; producing a sort of jingling harmony, not unlike

a concert of Jew's harps; though Mr. Mulcaster averred they were an orchestra of tea-kettles.

After a due evaporation of laudatory breath all round, Miss Augusta's pert coxcomb undertook a comic song; than hearing which, there is not a sorer trial, (short of racking,) in this world of many inflictions. William Mulcaster's face was fire for him: Dora Clavering's was a pretty mixture of concern and ridicule. The Dean kept blessing himself, that amongst all his son's fancies, there never had been that of turning merry-andrew; while Jane Mulcaster, with her usual excessive charity to every human being, was sincerely trying to be amused, and to think Mr. Spratt, at least, very good-natured!

Mr. Spratt meanwhile was now grovelling in basso, now leaping up into falsetto; alternately trilling and talking, jabbering French and English in musical colloquy between a Parisian frisseur and a British tar; "playing such fantastic tricks before high Heaven," William whis-

pered to Dora, "as make e'en angels smile." It may be supposed that the young lady smiled not the less sweetly, from the emphasis laid on the term angel.

Mr. Spratt's self-complacent conclusion was greeted with thunders of applause. William Mulcaster held practically to the doctrine of acted falsehoods being less criminal than asserted ones: so instead of uttering, he set the example of clapping hands. Stanhope, however, shouted bravo! in compliment to Jane's compassion for the unconscious delinquent. Mrs. Shafto nearly smothered Mr. Spratt under a perfect fall of compliments: Miss Augusta added her admiration, to the gracious shower; supplicating Mr. Spratt for another exquisite treat! repeating, "He sang with such inimitable humour, yet so truly like the man of fashion!"

Mr. Spratt jerked his head, and shuffled his feet, and twirled his eyeglass, and ha-ha'd! and pulled up successively, the silk capes of nine divers

coloured under waistcoats. (For Mr. Spratt was a dandy of that day with a waist ending just above his breast.) The ladies did him too much honour! — he never professed to be a singer; — he merely had a little talent for imitation. Suet had once told him, that he, Mr. Spratt, was the only person that had ever imitated him exactly. It really was odd that just hearing sailors, and such sort of people at watering-places, he was able to catch their extraordinary manner and slang at once. Mr. Mulcaster's hands involuntarily lifted, as he looked at this poor creature, naming himself in the same breath with a brave British sailor. He stooped to the ear of his sister Jane, muttering, "The fool will bite! watch him! he'll take the hook in a minute:" and again, as Miss Augusta renewed her raptures, and Mr. Spratt bowed acceptance of an invitation to an annual hay festival, he added almost audibly: "Yes, yes, he's flattered, and fête'd and fatted for sacrifice — a

sacrifice to Hymen, — O ye immortal gods!"

Even respectful admiration of Dora Clavering, had not yet cured William of his unqualified modes of praise and blame: and like many other young people, he provoked enmity by such unguarded display of his contempt or aversion. The Dean, looking at him with more approbation of his feelings than recollection of their possible consequences, inwardly exclaimed, "I certainly have not a Lord Chesterfield for a son! however 'tis an honest boy; — to say no better of him."

Mrs. Shafto's green cheek, evinced that the muttered ridicule had reached her ear; and two minutes afterwards, she was by the side of Sir John Henderson as he arose from a whist table.

Dreading the effect of Miss Augusta Shafto's importunities, the Dean looked towards a very fine organ which covered the lower end of the music-room, audibly wishing that some one might be able to

play on it, and give him a piece of Handel's.

"My sister is rather celebrated as an organ player," said Miss Clavering, with a sister's sweet energy of affection. "Shall I ask her to play?"

This offer was accepted, and Dora went to the instrument. William could now amply return the compliment of delight and astonishment. As her small white hands pressed down and rested on the keys, in one of Handel's noblest anthems, rich sounds swelled and sunk on the tranced ear, with majestic ebb and flow; now rolling on, like majestic thunder; now pausing, lingering, expiring, as the faint night-breeze dies among wood-tops.

Whilst Dora played, her youthful countenance kindled into an expression well suited to the graceful action of her head and neck, and to the glorious music pealing under her touch. The hackneyed idea of a St. Cecilia was unavoidable; but the Dean actually warmed into enthusiasm, yet unwilling to give it

more than half-jesting utterance, declared that "were he of the Romish church, he should think her no bad emblem of the salutation-lily, surrounded by clouds of incense."

Blushing and palpitating, Dora rose from the instrument: the Dean's eyes sparkled as he looked at her. "What would I give," he exclaimed, "for a daughter that could treat me thus! Can't I make out that you are one of mine, only changed at nurse? — with Jane for instance — since she will soon be as good as no child to me."

"Or suppose you marry mamma!" Dora cried thoughtlessly, enchanted at having given pleasure to Mr. Mulcaster's father.

"Very good," resumed the Dean, "I believe a marriage must have something to do with it." At that moment Dora thought the Dean looked like his son; and she blushed as deeply, as if it had indeed been William's eye, which had pointed the meaning of his rejoinder.

William's heart, like his countenance,

was all disorder and delight. Intoxicated with love, encouragement, and his father's marked approval, he was almost too giddy to trust himself near her. He felt that a very little more was wanting to make him discard the sportive tone under which he had hitherto concealed the quick growth of his admiration, and at once address her seriously. But a fortnight's acquaintance did not warrant such presumption: at least it was not sufficient to permit of any tangible proposal for her friends' consideration; and he therefore endeavoured to bridle the unruly passionateness of his disposition, as strongly as his fast-ebbing strength would allow. He went up to Miss Clavering, and breathed into her ear, all the raptures he durst not give voice to, with Dora herself.

Mrs. Shafto was just then insinuating her poison to Sir John Henderson, as he and she stood in an arched door way, between the two rooms. She began by lamentations upon Miss Clavering's ill health; feared she was consumptive from

her transparent complexion; it was a family complaint most likely, from the other sisters being taken to Lisbon: it would be very melancholy were she to be snatched from life, just as such a noble fortune had come into her possession! — but of course the Aycliffe property was willed to the sisters in succession: — Miss Dora would inherit?"

Sir John evaded a reply to the last remark, by merely assuring Mrs. Shafto that he did not believe there was any hereditary complaint in the family. — Mrs. Shafto was enchanted to hear him say so; because it was evident from the very pointed attentions of both Mr. William Mulcaster and his worthy father, what their views were with regard to Miss Dora. — It was really a matter of benevolent rejoicing, to see such wonderful absence of what imprudent people called worldly considerations, in a man of the Dean's age and station! His son would only have an estate of £3000 a year at his father's death, (and was a very free dispenser of his present allowance,) there-

fore that he did not look out for *a fortune* in marriage was singularly disinterested. — Poor Miss Clavering looked so little fitted for enjoying her great wealth, that Mrs. Shafto almost wished she could send to Doctors' Commons and have the will examined, and find out that Miss Dora was the heiress. Badinage apart, she really thought, from the eldest sister's looks, Miss Dora would soon be mistress of Aycliffe; and she thought, that if ever a young man deserved an unexpected fortune with a wife, it would be Mr. Mulcaster, from his evident disinterested contempt of it now.

Mrs. Shafto's shots had all told. The unobservant Baronet was consternated. Laudably afraid of suffering a young lady's affections to be entangled, ere he knew how her mother would approve of it, and that by a person who might (as Mrs. Shafto had contrived to insinuate,) be actuated by the notion she had conceived, nay perhaps by that very examination at Doctors' Commons which she jested about; he moved uneasily from

side to side, thrusting his hands in and out of his waistcoat pockets, in obvious perturbation.

" I am obliged to you for this hint, madam," he said fretfully: " having young ladies under one's care for any time is a very great inconvenience; and a most thankless office into the bargain. I really don't imagine Mr. Mulcaster or the Dean, knows or cares any thing about — but it's quite as well to be on the safe side. Mrs. Clavering must dispose of her own daughters. I shall cut the matter very short, and be denied to the young gentleman a few times; — he's a sensible fellow, and can't mistake the meaning of that."

Mrs. Shafto fortified him in this resolution, whilst appearing to combat it, by pleading for the supposed lover. Soon afterwards carriages being announced, and cloaks called for, the various personages exchanged " good nights," and departed.

The next morning, when Honoria's homely attendant came to assist her at

rising, she presented a face of whimsically dolorous expression. After being affectionately questioned as to its cause, and faintly resisting such enquiry, she suddenly seated herself with instant change of resolution, and began; determined to have *a long say*.

She had heard of Captain Fitz Arthur being ill, she said, the night before, in the village, and " had been off that morning to enquire after him, as soon as it was *dacent* for a *famale* to be abroad all by herself; and indeed the Captain was very ill, and all the house were crying och hone for him. And one servant said, he had catched a big could standing out in the rain to please Master Thomas; and another said, it was eating some foreign kickshaw, thelikes of ice perhaps at the officers' breakfast, for he'd never been well since. But Mr. Daniel Blake had told her his private opinion, (and she *dare say'd* he was right; — and Daniel must be right, because he was her countryman, and was once a souldier in the Captain's regiment, and was ready to go through fire and water for him any day!)"

Honoria feared to ask what was the opinion of Mr. Daniel Blake. Hetty Macready did not wait for questioning; the flood-gates of her heart and tongue were open, and she rushed on in full tide.

"Och, darling! and is it you that don't know your sweet face is the Captain's poison. Sorrow on that Miss Clavering's great big fortune! Daniel says he's sure, that's the billet of bog-wood, the son and father have words about." And then Hetty went on to repeat Mr. Daniel's eloquent anathema against Sir Everard for urging his heir into a marriage solely for the sake of fortune; quoting his pathetic conclusion, "that money was the very devil!" together with his "positive belief, that if we could see the Evil One in the body, we should see him all covered with gold."

There had been a time when Honoria, even under distress of mind, could not have resisted the ludicrous image thus seriously presented; but her smiles were quenched; and turning away, she wiped off a trickling tear.—Hetty resumed:—

" ' If your pictor of a young lady,' says he, ' had Miss Clavering's castle yonder, see, if she wouldn't have Arthur's Court into the bargain, in no time; my poor master can't see daylight for her!' — ' Fait, and I agree with you, Dan,' says I, ' only there's a trifle of differ between us. My young lady wouldn't be mistress of Arthur's Court if she could. — She has plenty of as good gentlemen as your master, to choose out of; no offence to him any how, — the darling! and let me tell you a bit of my mind; — if he cares one rap for what his father says on the subject of his *affictions;* or even casts a thought upon money at all at all, himself, he's not fit to wipe my lady's shoes. — Long life to the Irishman! says I, — see if he cares whether the devil stands at the door. — Doesn't he carry off the girl he fancies, in the teeth of every relation he has, standing in stocking? Fait, and knocks me down every one of hers too, as if they were so many turf-clods. Did you ever hear of an Irishman that cared whether he had a house or a bog to take

her to, or a potato to give her? — Och, and that's the only sort of love fit to be named to a young lady.' — I says all this, you see, darling, out of *dacent* pride; by way of keeping up our *rispictability:* for there doesn't step man on shoe leather shall say Miss O'Hara would have taken me, if she could have *wonst* had the offer of me. — So I bridled up to Mr. Daniel, as if you was the queen."

"Oh Hetty, dear Hetty!" cried Honoria, in absolute anguish. "Why did you say any thing at all? — You ought not to be able to guess how I think of Captain Fitz Arthur, — and no one has a right to imagine his thoughts. — Captain Fitz Arthur is the truest friend I ever had, or ever shall have, and I wish him all happiness with Miss Clavering. I hope — I hope he will be happy." Tears burst out with Honoria's interrupted words; but afraid of the just interpretation Hetty might put upon them, she hastily suffocated their gush, and asked more particulars concerning Fitz Arthur's illness.

From all she could collect, she was indeed impressed with the conviction that his bodily suffering was partly from his first shock of disappointment, partly from more recent harassing distress, in consequence of his father's resentment at her, and his desire to see him the husband of Miss Clavering. Her rash refusal, then, had created bitterness between father and son, — and such a father and son! — No after act of hers could repair the breach: the only atonement she could offer must be one they would never know of, — constant prayers that Fitz Arthur's heart might be influenced to repair his own peace, satisfy his father, and end all her hopes or wishes. Such prayers were now, indeed, become a duty to Honoria; and perhaps with more desolation than resignation of spirit, did she determine that they should henceforth be the business of her life.

Hetty meanwhile eyed her young lady with keen attention: but there was a certain look which whenever Ho-

noria purposely assumed, imposed restraint upon her foster-mother's tongue; and the wild-headed, yet true-hearted Irishwoman now checked her own impulse of pleading Captain Fitz Arthur's cause, and boldly taxing the saddened Honoria with having relented to him.

Our heroine soon passed from the presence of Hetty, into that of her uncle and aunt; where she was forced to listen to the latter's triumphant details of all the Shafto splendour: interspersed as they were with supercilious references to the shabby way, in comparison, of the living at Ravenshaw, and at St. Cuthberts; where she knew every body ate mutton, and drank Sherry wine. At Shafto Place there wasn't a dish that she knew the name of, and all the ladies were dressed so fashionably, — such good things! — And Miss Honor must never call Mrs. Shafto haughty, — she was so condescending! If she had been the Bishop's lady she could not have been treated more handsomer; and though all the rest of the

company were grandees, there was Mr. Tudor there, who did talk such stuff! She only wondered at Mrs. Shafto's goodness, seeing he was only a tutor!

Mr. Meredith mildly corrected her notions of a tutor; instancing some of the best and most dignified luminaries of the church. But none are so disdainful of every thing short of decided rank and obvious power, as persons who are themselves indebted to patronage.

Mrs. Meredith turned upon her meek husband with unwonted fierceness, and the usual tempest soon raged through the house; happily it never abated until every inhabitant of the shaking edifice had taken their share of its fury; the virago, therefore, was not long of launching herself out into the kitchen amongst the servants, leaving her husband and niece to seek covert in the study of the former.

There, the one kindly read passages aloud as they struck him during his otherwise silent perusal, while the other

more silently pursued an embroidered trimming for her friend Jane Mulcaster.

As she worked, thinking of Jane's approaching nuptials; of Miss Mulcaster's expected marriage with Captain Barrington after four years of cheerless, almost hopeless separation; of William Mulcaster's evident and encouraged attachment to Dora Clavering; of her sister's more agitating prospects; some lines in Lord Francis Fitz James's little volume, pressed upon her recollection: they were describing a heart from which the hopes, nay expectations, common to all, were removed by disastrous circumstances: they were applicable to herself:

> ——— "For now, I am
> Like one left stranded on some desert coast,
> Who sees gay skiffs, and freighted ships, go by
> In various voyage, far off on the sea."

And as she thought of all these different persons, their various courses, (for each was going on some course,) and of the havens to which each tended; she felt as though *her* destiny were fixed in cheerless loneliness. How changed seemed

life to her! — how changed her own heart! She would have hung over those gloomy convictions in utter desolation, had not the very contemplation of Fitz Arthur's character and conduct awakened the sense of her own accountability. She too had a course and haven, — she too had hopes and expectations; her track, was duties; her port, the world beyond the present.

Honoria was interrupted in such musings, by a farewell note from Lady Wearmouth, accompanied by a beautiful specimen of carved ivory, originally sent to his mother by Captain Barrington, when in China, with similar curiosities. Lady Wearmouth transferred it, she said, to Miss O'Hara, that she might have something to give her friend Jane Mulcaster on her marriage; some gift not likely to be anticipated by any other friend. After simply offering this reason as an excuse for such a present, the Countess proceeded to say, that as she believed her future arrangements with her son would make Ravenshaw her

residence during the remainder of her life, when she returned to take possession of it towards Christmas, she should claim not only a renewal of acquaintance with Miss O'Hara, but the favour of a long visit from her. Meanwhile, she should duly inform her of the prosperous or unsatisfactory settlement of the Indian business, as soon as the commission of enquiry had brought it to a close.

This letter was pleasing to Honoria on more than one account. She was gratified by the belief that Lady Wearmouth had divined her indifference about expensive baubles for herself; yet gave her credit for wishing to bestow them upon the objects of her affection. There was true nobleness of mind and kindness of heart in this judgment and this conduct. Mrs. Shafto, had *she* been impelled or compelled to bestow a present upon Miss O'Hara, would have tried to overwhelm her, by giving something that if accepted must be worn or used by the acceptor herself, and be of a nature to keep up a constant sense

of the awful difference between the parties.

A grateful little note was hastily returned by the servant from Ravenshaw, with many respectful wishes for the speedy arrival of Captain Barrington and consequent return of Lady Wearmouth into Northumberland; after which Honoria locked her beautiful work-box out of Mrs. Meredith's sight by her uncle's desire, and sat down again to explain that part of Lady Wearmouth's note which regarded the treasure-elephant.

She had not yet spoken upon the subject, simply from timidity; conscious that some lurking hope connected with those at Arthur's Court, lay behind this expectation of fortune. Mr. Meredith's satisfaction was very great; he pointed out to her all for which she ought to adore a gracious Providence were such prospects realized; while he prepared her to submit to their disappointment, in the firm assurance that their actual possession would be denied, solely from

some greater virtue to be exercised in her, or some infirmity to be conquered by such blessing withheld! — He perfectly agreed in the propriety and prudence of keeping the matter as private as possible, until it were quite decided; therefore advised her not to mention it even to his wife. Honoria internally thanked him for this permission in the shape of advice: — after which they separated.

That very morning, our poor heroine was obliged to accompany her aunt, in a late purchase of Mr. Meredith's, an old-fashioned whisky, to pay a visit in due form at Shafto Place. With an emotion very like joy, did she hear the welcome sounds, "Not at home." Her satisfaction, indeed, was so perfect, that it fortified her against the alternate insolence and ill-humour of her companion back to the Rectory.

Honoria, however, had not the pain of intimacy to dread with those of Shafto Place. The mistress of it having ascertained that Lord Francis Fitz James was actually gone from Ravenshaw, and Lady Wearmouth gone, and Lord Francis going

immediately abroad to join Lord Malmesbury's diplomatic corps at Lisle, dismissed her contradiction of hope and fear, about his serious admiration of the Irish orphan. She, therefore, adroitly resolved to take advantage of Miss O'Hara's proud reluctance to visit at Shafto Place; and while excluding her dangerously handsome face from scenes where it might mar the effect of her daughters' pale visages, affect to consider it as a mortification to them; and so ever retain the power of coming forward with the *claim of suffering regard* upon Miss O'Hara, should she become at last of consequence to reflect honour.

Occupied as the family at St. Cuthberts were with Jane's approaching marriage, and averse to seeking them as Honoria was, from apprehension of Jane's affectionate anxiety penetrating her sad secret, they did not meet for some days after their separate dinner engagements. When they did, it was at the Rectory, whither Jane came one fine morning, to pour out, not her own griefs, but those

of poor William:—his halcyon hour was gone!

The friends had retreated from Mr. Meredith's study into Honoria's little chamber. As Jane closed the door, she turned a most distressed countenance upon her companion. "O my dear Honor," she exclaimed, "William is so miserable!—he is never let in at Monksden now.—When he and I are by ourselves, he sometimes looks and talks so wildly that I am quite terrified.—Then at other times he is so low and silent; he is not five minutes out of my sight, that my heart does not die within me for fear. I dare not tell you what I fear sometimes!" Jane's blanched cheek, and faltering voice, spoke plainly enough.

Honoria in grief and astonishment besought her to say what all this meant. "Could it be possible that Miss Dora Clavering had only been coquetting with Mr. Mulcaster?"

Jane did not know;—she hoped not;—she would not think it possible:—such a sweet artless creature as she appeared!

— But the fact was, that William had been every day as usual at Monksden, enquiring first for Sir John, and then for the ladies, and he had never been admitted. If the Misses Clavering were allowed to be at home; then both Sir John and his lady were out, and of course he could not in propriety go in then. None of them had been to St. Cuthberts, although Jane had called and left cards for them all. So whether Miss Dora would keep her promise and come to her wedding, Jane guessed not. William was now gone to make a last attempt, with a note from Jane on the subject of the marriage, just to see what answer would be returned, supposing he was forced to leave it with a servant. He was gone with a very full heart, he was so indignant, and so unhappy.

" For William is quite serious now, I assure you, Honoria," continued the partial sister, " but he is entertaining, let him be ever so miserable. When he first owned to me that there was no jest in his feeling for Dora Clavering, he

made me laugh; for he said, though with such a sigh, that I was a wretch for laughing, — 'I thought, Jane, that Love had overtaken you with pretty good strides, but he has put on his seven-league boots for me.' — My poor William! to think he is to be twice used so! but he never cared for Lady Catherine as he does for this cruel Dora: if she had cared really for him, he would have loved her at last; for you know his dear, grateful heart, that can't withstand the caress even of a dog."

Honoria, while expressing her sincere concern, suggested that this painful interdict might be merely the result of prudent watchfulness on the part of Sir John and Lady Henderson: that she thought, if Mr. Mulcaster were sure of his own inclinations, he had better speak to his father at once; after which it would be easy to learn, whether the young lady were the actual mover of this affair.

Jane granted she was right, because Stanhope had recommended the same

mode of proceeding. Honoria thought of her own secret, as she observed that Major Stanhope was now the depository of all those entrusted to Jane's keeping.

"But the worst is to come yet," resumed Jane; "only think of William being so madly venturous, as to go every night to Monksden; roaming about the grounds there to look at Dora's window, or just because he can't live out of the place. It is a perfect miracle that he was not shot the first night by the gamekeeper; but these people are all so fond of him; he is so generous to them!"

Honoria trembled at the young man's imprudence, earnestly exhorting Jane not to let it remain concealed from the Dean. Jane declared she had only found it out that very morning, by accidentally going into her brother's room, to rouse him for the sight of a peculiarly fine sunrise. That not finding him there, and questioning the housemaid, she had discovered that he had not slept a whole night in his bed for the last five nights. "Of course," she added, "I gave Sally a

serious lecture for aiding him in this mad conduct, and gave him a much severer one afterwards for tempting an ignorant woman to such improper concealment. He was quite humble and sorry, and pleaded so hard for indulgence to a real feeling, that I had not the heart to persist in saying I would tell my father. And now, what is to be done if he comes back unsuccessful?"

Honoria could suggest no better advice than she had already suggested; and Jane being made a hearty convert to its reasonableness and necessity, then turned to the happier subject of her own approaching marriage.

The true interest which Honoria took in this, gave back animation to eyes and cheeks, from which both light and colour went out the moment she was left to her own thoughts again. Jane's spirit hurried and confused by her own joyfulness and her brother's distraction, was easily cheated by semblances, so that she did not notice the perturbation with which Honoria warded off every subject which

tended towards the family at Arthur's Court. Indeed so successful was the attempt to avoid all mention of them, that not till long afterwards, when Jane was fairly on the road to St. Cuthberts, did she recollect with compunction, that she had omitted speaking of their poor friend Captain Fitz Arthur. Major Stanhope, however, pacified her conscience, by the assurance, that he had been giving Mr. Meredith full information.

CHAP. IV.

WHILST this visit was paying, a very different scene was transacting, not six miles off.

As Jane had described, Mr. Mulcaster proceeded direct to Monksden; sometimes riding slowly in gloomy dejection, sometimes spurring his horse with impatient despair or sudden hope.

In a bridle road upon which opened one of the private entrances into the Monksden demesne, his horse took the fancy of rearing, plunging, and kicking, as if to rouse his master out of the stupor of thought into which he had just then fallen. William soon mastered him, (for next to Delaval Fitz Arthur he was considered the best horseman in the county,) and when he had done so, he rode the animal up and down for a few

short turns, patting and coaxing him with good-humoured kindliness.

Had William been in the habits of swearing and lashing on such occasions, he would soon have had his punishment; for almost the next instant as he once more turned back from the house, he saw Dora Clavering springing out of a cottage by the way side, evidently hurrying to get back unseen into the park.

Leaping from his horse, and hastily giving the bridle to his groom, he hastened after her, uttering some confused, delighted, half-reproachful expressions. Dora as hastily curtsying and stammering, yet blushing encouragingly, sprang past him to the open door, and hurrying in, would have locked it against his entrance, had he not pushed in after her.

As he addressed her, enquiring about her sister, merely to begin conversation, she turned away her head, answering with an attempt at coldness, which however appeared exceedingly like pique or actual pain, that her sister's health could not be of much consequence to him, he

had been so long without coming to enquire after her! This accusation produced an *éclaircissement*, which seemed as little displeasing to the lady as to the gentleman. Dora had never heard that Mr. Mulcaster had called once at Monksden since they met at Shafto Place; and Lady Henderson had been very seldom out, and other visitors had been admitted. So he must have been purposely denied. What could be the reason of all this?

William's heart bounded at the inference. Nothing was so flattering, as that Sir John and Lady Henderson should deem it necessary to exclude him from the frequent society of Miss Clavering. She must have shown some symptoms of caring more for him than for an ordinary acquaintance. Animated, nay emboldened by this idea, he betook himself to the most impassioned complaints against the very ill-usage of Lady Henderson; and to protestations that let her be ever so weary of his company, so long as Miss Dora Clavering had not commanded him to be denied admittance, he was comparatively indifferent to the denial.

Dora's gentle eye and cheek glowed with emotions, which she felt it wrong to show, therefore sought to hide, under an air of resentment at Lady Henderson, and of carelessness with regard to her present companion. "It was indeed," she said, "a most extraordinary proceeding in Lady Henderson, treating her sister Agnes as well as herself, as if she were a child! Lady Henderson must have heard them both wondering at Mr. Mulcaster's sudden desertion of Monksden, where they concluded he had all his life been in the habit of coming every day. It was not very just in her, to let them suppose him so very capricious and inconstant. She did not mean inconstant, she meant to say, inconsistent."

William was all over pulse with tumultuous hopes. He pressed to know if she had indeed honoured him by one thought, during his dismal days of exile?

"We could not avoid thinking of you," was the artless answer. "The children made such lamentations! I was

quite worn with their eternal, ' When will Mr. Mulcaster come, when will Mr. Mulcaster come !' "

" Dear, dear little creatures !" exclaimed William, " and you were *worn* with hearing me wished for. How unkind of you, Miss Clavering !"

Dora thought it right to toss her pretty head. " In truth I hear of nothing else but you ; so I may be wearied. I did but peep into that cottage the other morning, and pat a dog or a cat, I forget which, and whole histories were the consequence. I have heard of persons just wise enough to keep themselves out of the fire, but I find that you have not even that degree of sense. — I am sorry to be so uncivil. — What an edifying acquaintance we have made in you !"

William begged to be enlightened upon his own character, professing ignorance of what she meant: and transported to hear himself talked of by her.

" Have you forgot the mill that was burned down last winter, when you chose to play the fireman ; and after leaping

like harlequin over blazing rafters, to haul out sacks, and I know not what, you must e'en go back for the idiot boy's cat or dog. Upon my word you have a truly sensible notion of the value of life, and the duty of young gentlemen to their families!" Dora spoke with a tone of ridicule; but there was that in her eye and smile, which showed her not unwilling to offer this sufficient excuse, even to William himself, for her increased interest in him.

"And who told you this frolic of mine," asked William, glowing with pleasure.

"O, the woman beyond the gate there. I had been gathering her some groundivy, and when we saw you ingeniously trying to break your neck, just opposite the little window, this pretty story naturally came into her head." Dora did not add, that she was then hearing it for the third time, and that the present was the second time of her going purposely alone to hear it, so added: "I am afraid you are but a sorry personage

after all, since I find you are under the necessity of buying a character." William repeated the offensive expression in a tone of question. "Yes, by making the popular and generous," resumed Dora. "Goody of the gate lauded you up to the skies, for getting off your horse one day in a dirty lane, Heaven knows where, to help Heaven knows who, to patch up his broken cart: to hear the old woman, one might have thought you had jumped off a throne instead of a plain saddle in the performance of this signal feat. Then I understand you scamper over the county, sowing it with shillings and sixpences for the little ragged children. I really did not comprehend, the other day, when you were with us in the carriage, why all the gates and hatches flew open at the mere nod of your magnificent head. Of course you go back and fee the urchins. Upon my word, sir, with such wasteful habits you must never think of marrying any woman that has not a hundred thousand pounds."

"Ten pence would content me, with one I could name," said William, thrilling as he spoke.

Dora's presence of mind deserted her for the moment; she merely tried to say something irrelevant. William's delicacy of feeling hastened him in relieving her from this confusion; for though a conversation of fourteen minutes had emboldened him to hint pretty plainly at his wishes, an acquaintance of little more than as many days, had not given him the hardihood to speak deliberately out. "You seem so glad to collect stories against me," he said, "that I am sure you must dislike me."

"It would be uncivil to contradict you," Dora archly replied: then after a little pause, "And now, sir, pray be so good as tell me, why you ride such horrid horses? If you have any regard for the folks you may otherwise kill on the road, I presume you won't ride him back!"

"If you would but say that you advise me not to ride him, out of some

small care for me," William said hesitatingly, though presumptuous passion was kindling in his looks. Dora obstinately persisted in denying him such satisfaction, professing the most perfect indifference on the subject.

"By this hand, sweet Dora!" he cried, putting out his own to seize hers, "I vow you cannot be so unfeeling."

"Dora!" she repeated, snatching herself beyond his reach. "But you are quite right to call attention to your hand, being the only tolerable thing about you."

"I meant *your* hand," returned William with bolder tenderness, masking it by levity. "As you seem to prefer mine, it is perfectly at your service."

"Equally smart and flippant!" remarked Dora, crimsoning, "but much too like your joke last week about our names. I do wonder how many times you say the same thing."

"And I wonder how many poor fellows are yet extant, that you have trampled on and tortured, as you are now doing me."

"Not one!" exclaimed Dora, with heedless eagerness, "I never gave any man the thousandth part—" She stopt, confounded at her own flattering vehemence. William did not miss this vantage ground. He seized her hands, gently forcing her down upon one of the wood seats near their path. "Now you must, you shall own to me after this, that you care a little for me!" Dora resisted most gallantly; William would not be driven back: he kept entreating for one kind word of assurance that he was not hateful to her, whilst running over a long catalogue of his merits. The principal of these, consisted in the fact of his having lived for the last five nights in the demesne of Monksden, roaming round the house, (in defiance of the abbot's ghost said to haunt it,) merely to gaze upon the walls that enclosed her.

This confession was irresistible in its actual effect. Dora still refused acknowledging it. At first indeed, she was thrown off her guard; and her excla-

mations at his rashness, for coming where he might have been shot by the gamekeeper for a poacher, or worried by the great dog as a thief, were too expressive of interest to pass unfelt. William, however, had the generalship not to let her perceive the interpretation of which each word was capable, until he had drawn them all forth; he was then ungenerous enough to turn the whole battery against herself. Dora renewed her assertions, that she had not given him any advantage; managing in as masterly a way as his own, to fight off any thing like serious tenderness, by taking the matter as a frolic of his; urging him into a renewed description of his encounters with the dog and the gamekeeper: which told with the light-hearted spirit of risk-loving youth, caused genuine mirth between them, sentimental as they considered themselves. Yet again William returned to the charge, of insisting upon hearing her say, she would have been rather sorry to have found him shot by the gun of long Jones.

"How very vain you must be," she exclaimed, "to imagine, after so short an acquaintance, that I care whether you live or die! But you have not yet said that you won't ride that creature back."

"I won't, I won't," repeated William, absolutely intoxicated by her manner. "This morning I would not have sold him for two hundred guineas; and now I'll give him to Stanhope. Yet why should I, since you say you don't care whether I live or die? Indeed you proved it, by not coming out to see the fate of his kicking and rearing, when you were in that cottage." Dora could have said, that she had sat there only because she was not able to stand. "And then out you came, after a whole quarter of an hour, as blooming as ever!"

"*After* a quarter of an hour," returned Dora playfully, yet with slight emphasis.

Again William's heart throbbed; but like others of his dissembling sex, he

concealed his gratification under reiterated complaints. "How cruel! how very cruel! Well, it is only coming again at night, and not answering Jones, or coaxing Tyger, and then there will be an end of me. — You won't care, — and I shall have had the consolation of meeting my death for your sake!"

"Base creature!" exclaimed Dora, calling him base, because conscious she ought to think him so. "But you are not so mad, or rather wicked, after all. Now you have had all our seeming uncivil treatment of you explained, you may be content without coming into these grounds at the hazard of your life."

"Content!" repeated William. "What! and be debarred from entering the house! for I see the Hendersons never mean to admit me again, for some reason or other."

"Well, if your charming sisters choose to keep up the acquaintance, we shall only be twenty miles off. We go to Aycliffe as soon as mamma comes, and I suppose, as you seem so fond of riding

about, that it will be no violent exercise of your civility to escort your sisters' carriage." Dora uttered this with more embarrassment than she had yet spoken with; conscience whispering, how much it told. William eagerly enquired when Mrs. Clavering was expected. "In a week perhaps," was the reply, "or two weeks — or a month — or two months!"

"Good Heaven! and I may not see you all that time!" exclaimed William, actually maddened with the thought. "Pray, pray, promise me not to keep always in these horrid grounds. There are a thousand prettier walks out of them. — Then I may have a chance — do say where you ——"

Dora turned on him such a look! Playfulness and blushes were quenched. She broke from the grasp that would have detained her on the wood seat, exclaiming, "I have staid too long with you, Mr. Mulcaster! — You might have spared me this!" A burst of tears relieved her pang of self-blame.

William's contrition was sincere, pas-

sionate, respectful: the sight of her tears awed, while they penetrated, his heart. He actually dropt on one knee, and tremblingly seizing both her hands, detained her to listen to him. What he meant to say, or what he did say, he could not have narrated afterwards; but he certainly said a great deal, and very much to the purpose. He began by declaring that he would not presume to breathe one serious word upon the subject nearest his heart, on so short an acquaintance. No; he would devote himself to months, years of humble service, slavery, devotedness, any thing she pleased, so he but pleased her at last, and got her permission to speak out. He could not presume to think in earnest, that she ever bestowed a thought upon him: — he never insinuated it, except in *badinage*. He besought her pardon for his criminal entreaty about telling him where she would walk; — distraction had wrung it from him. In short, she was perfection, and he one mass of faults and impertinence!

To this transport of eloquence, Dora answered only by blushes and fluttering sighs, and efforts to disengage herself, and entreaties that he would hold his tongue. But William only kept holding her hands, and he did so, till he had drawn her back to the garden-seat, where she was obliged to reseat herself, protesting that it was impossible to get her weak little hand, out of his great, grasping ones; tears still trembled in her eyes, as dew drops linger in the cups of the blue-bell. "You are so wilful!" she cried, "an absolute tyrant! I pity the poor woman that is to be ruled by you!"

If this allusion were intended, it was too trying, and merited the impassioned pressure which William directly gave to the hand he would not yet release; if it were only unconscious utterance of a thought, it deserved the conquest he made over himself of not snatching that hand to his lips. Dora, however, was near starting up again. Once more he withheld her by mingled humbleness and

audacity; while she bravely took the resolution of rallying back her spirits, and resuming the safer tone of gaiety. She was, however, not quite reconciled either to him or to herself.

"I *am* forgiven, am I not?" enquired he, looking into her bashful face. "I should have been so miserable had you quarrelled with me to day; for it is my birthday."

"Indeed! and may one put the lawful question of how old are you?"

"I shall be one and twenty my next birthday."

Dora laughed outright at this ingenious mode of bringing forward a whole twelvemonths in advance.

"Will you not give me something on my birthday, Miss Clavering."

"Give you a pat on the head, and bid you be a good *boy*;" laying a provoking emphasis upon the last word.

"Well, then give them me;" and William, though colouring, presented the curls of his handsome head to her hand. Dora drew back with her air of

reserve. "When I confer distinctions, sir, I do it in full assembly." She was no longer to be detained; she rose, and walked from him.

Her repentant admirer followed submissively; again acknowledging a fault, and supplicating pardon. At that moment a vision of Lady Henderson through the trees, made Dora instinctively fall back towards him for protection: momentary confusion terminated her anger. William looked earnestly at her. "Have I your leave to proceed! *I* should *like* to proceed." "Certainly," was the firm reply, for now Dora had courage. "I shall take it for granted that I have not been wilfully excluded," resumed William. — They went on.

Lady Henderson was now full in view, and having the same advantage which they enjoyed, had time to prevent herself from showing any outward surprise or vexation at finding them thus together.

"Well, Lady Henderson!" cried William, as she came near. "Here I find you as usual, like Peace or Plenty, with

your cornucopia of fruits and flowers, peaches and roses." (Patting the cheeks of the blooming boys and girls that ran joyfully to meet and hug him). "I thought I never was to see any of you again. That horrid dragon, your porter, guards his Hesperian tree with a vengeance! You see I don't keep Mr. Tudor's company for nothing: I am becoming quite classical." William's gaiety was effort at this moment, and like all affected things, was awkward and insipid. But Lady Henderson favoured him with a good-natured smile as she saw her children hanging round him; adding honestly, that she was very sorry that she could not admit him as often as she wished; but Sir John accused her of making a monopoly of Mr, Mulcaster, and she really thought it was not fair for her to tempt him away from his own family, when one of his sisters was so soon going to leave it.

William mused an instant at this mention of Sir John; it insinuated pretty plainly what he had suspected; and

turning upon Lady Henderson a look of meaning quite as translateable as her own, he said smilingly: "Then if my father will come and depone to their not wanting me at St. Cuthberts, I hope Sir John will let me return to my voluntary slavery here." He bowed to Lady Henderson, but he looked at Dora.

"I am now enacting the part of carrier from Jane," he added, presenting the letter to the blushing girl, which he had hitherto forgotten. "I was to have taken back an answer, but I will now take myself off; and leave the answer to be settled when my father comes." William disappeared on the instant, gallantly wound up to the pitch of proud self-denial, by previous conviction that he should leave in Dora's young breast, hopes, wishes, and purposes, in harmony with his own.

It was not Lady Henderson's province to interfere with Miss Dora Clavering's private thoughts respecting Mr. Mulcaster, or any other gentleman; and sincerely vexed at being obliged to exclude

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him for a while from Monksden, yet forbidden by her husband to enter uninvited upon the subject of assiduities, which she still believed were half the lawful property of her children, she walked back to the house, without making any particular remarks upon their rencontre.

Dora's little heart had now lost its boasted courage of resentment. Instead of questioning Lady Henderson about her reasons for excluding Mr. Mulcaster, she confusedly related their accidental meeting, and immediately opened her note from Jane. This, containing official information of the day and hour appointed for the wedding, afforded a welcome subject for free and cheerful discussion. Lady Henderson seemed to take it for granted that Dora was to be at the ceremony, since her dress was ordered; and Dora, too glad to find there was no interdict laid on that long anticipated pleasure, hurried away the moment they reached the house, to tell all that had passed to her sister; and perhaps with her tender tearful assistance, to study

the tumultuous state of her own hitherto unstudied heart.

William meanwhile went straight home, where proceeding at once to his father, he made what the Scotch call *a clean breast;* candidly owning that he was yet too young to be privileged in seriously taking a wife unto himself: stating, that he had hitherto only thought of making himself better known to Miss Dora Clavering, and convincing her and his own family, of his sincerity and stability ere he should venture to ask permission to be heard and received as a declared lover. But that as circumstances now stood, he must suppose Sir John Henderson acted from doubts of his serious intentions, or of his father's approval, and that consequently it became him now, either to make both manifest, or to retire at once from the society of Dora Clavering.

Of Dora's fortune William professed total ignorance except from common report: he believed it was £10,000: —but he thought his father's manner

when he saw them together had been so kind, so gracious, that he had ventured to act upon it; that is, to give the bridle to his passion, and let it go its course in full sight of lookers-on. Now, all he solicited was, that his father would either see or write to Sir John Henderson, and say he would sanction his son's proposals, whenever it might be decorous for the latter to bring them forward. William humbly urged this, in the confidence that his dear father was like himself, indifferent about money, where there was already sufficient fortune on one side for complete domestic comfort. He had no higher ambition, he said, than to fill the station of a private English gentleman; making his county his home, and seeking the expensive metropolis solely for purposes of business. If he ever made such a character for himself, as might lead those he lived amongst to nominate him their representative in parliament, then indeed his duties would enlarge, and his expenses also. But even for this, he thought an

improvable estate of £3000 a year, was quite enough, if a man were not ashamed of being happy upon a smaller income than his neighbours. Meanwhile, (and he devoutly prayed God it might be the longest while possible!) he would have his own little property that his uncle left him, with whatever else his kind father thought him worthy of; and upon that he would undertake to live like a gentleman, with Dora Clavering, in the Bower Cottage.

The agitation with which William spoke when he was forced to make this painful allusion to the death of his father, went far beyond his few deprecatory words. The convulsed tone was not lost on the father's heart.

The Dean certainly was not in the least surprised by the matter of this harangue, though very much by the manner. There was a manly reasonableness and seriousness in the whole thing, which he did not expect from his son. It convinced him that much of William's petulant wilfulness in the every day of

his conduct, was mere whim and affectation; meant rather to amuse than to over-rule, or perhaps contracted by the habit of admiring such lordliness in his boyhood's idol, Lord Francis Fitz James. The harangue, therefore, had been heard with indulgence as well as patience.

Most grave discussion followed. The father resting upon the fact of William's age, exhorted his son to reconsider and weigh the matter well, ere he thus early decided upon engaging himself to a young lady with so moderate a fortune, upon so brief an acquaintance, placing before him all the miserable consequences of after repentance; refusing for his own part to go as far as William entreated, but offering a middle course,—of frankly stating to Sir John Henderson, (since he seemed authorised to act for Miss Clavering,) what was now passing between his son and himself, and seeking his permission for the continuance of a limited interchange of visits between the families, with the view of the young people becoming better assured of each other's

characters and inclinations, ere any thing of a more decided engagement should take place.

The Dean softened this refusal, by abundant encomiums upon his son's taste in his selection of Miss Dora Clavering, than whom he said, he had never seen a more engaging young creature; and as the worldly advantages lay all on his son's side, he was glad that his own observations enabled him to feel satisfied, that she was inclined to favour him from his own personal qualities alone. He had moreover taken the precaution, some few days back, of privately learning from a correspondent at Bath, the young lady's reputation there, both at home and abroad, and that account had made him remain so tranquil, whilst contemplating the rising partiality of those in question. He would not therefore start a single objection; provided a longer trial both of Dora's good qualities, and William's steady relinquishment of a brilliant life for one of humbler usefulness, authorised him to consent at last to their union.

He scarcely doubted Mrs. Clavering's willing attention to such proposals, from the advantageous nature of them; and he trusted, from the proposer coming forward also with an unblemished good name, and some character for tolerable sense.

William, all joy, all gratitude, yet with a little inward discontent, at the salutary check to be put upon his headlong eagerness, kissed his father's hand repeatedly, said a profusion of grateful and laudatory things, then hastened away to enrapture his darling sister, first with his scene at Monksden, and afterwards with that just gone through with his father.

But when did the course of true love ever run smooth? The Dean of —— lost no time in obtaining an interview with Sir John Henderson; from whom he learned three things, which gave most formidable check to William's hopes and his own.

In the first place Sir John was not Dora's guardian, only believed himself

bound in honour to act as one, whilst she was under his roof, and too far removed from her mother for consultation with her. In the second place, Dora might be mistress of Aycliffe Castle, even during her sister's life-time. If Miss Clavering were to marry a certain individual, (whom delicacy prevented Sir John from naming,) Mrs. Branspeth's will awarded her only the same portion she had left to the younger girls, transferring the estates to her other favourite, Dora. In the third place, Sir John had then in his pocket, (and he took care to draw it forth and flourish its flaming seal,) a letter from a Wiltshire Baronet, anxiously enquiring when Mrs. Clavering was expected from Lisbon, as he meant, on the instant in which Sir John would favour him with the information, to present himself for a proposal for that very daughter, on whom Mr. Mulcaster had unhappily placed his affections.

These were appalling circumstances: and the Dean (in whom *the natural man* much resembled William,) was at first

Miss Dora should be permitted to keep her engagement with the bride elect.

The worthy Baronet said some tolerably sensible things upon this occasion; evidencing that he knew something of the world, but little of the heart. He bluntly expressed his surprise that the Dean of —— did not see what a bad match it would be for his only son; one of such a very distinguished appearance, with £3000 or £4000 a year in prospect; for him to solicit a girl with only £10,000, when he might fairly look for an absolutely splendid fortune! — it was astonishing!

The Dean smiled. "According to your plan, my good Sir John," he said, "few marriages would take place in our sphere of life, and the consequence to morals I need not point out. First, you let me understand, that as Miss Dora has a chance for an estate of £5000 or £6000 per annum, she ought not to throw herself away upon my untitled boy with above £3000 in sure prospect: then, when you suppose her only gifted

with £10,000, you kindly wish me to consider her a very unfit alliance for my son; and if my son had nothing to balance against her £10,000, I rather suspect you would think the whole thing madness. — Well then, — what is to be done? — Why I must be satisfied, with my boy taking a wife upon the same terms, upon which I expect other men will take my daughters. Truly, if girls are not to hope for husbands in the rank of gentlemen, unless they themselves have more than £10,000, I pity seven eighths, even of the portioned young ladies!"

"Yes, — yes; — but — yes, — but —" hastily interposed Sir John, yet not well knowing what to say, "but Mr. Mulcaster is so young; he ought not to think of marrying for these ten years; if then."

"I certainly wish he had not had occasion to think of it quite so soon," returned the Dean. "I believe Sir John, I have some strange notions. This is one of them. As I look for all I care

about, living into another world, I rather would keep my eye upon what is likely to advance their happiness there, than here. Early marriage assuredly enters a man soon into cares and duties; but as surely it removes him sooner from outward and inward temptations of many kinds. A married man, you must know by experience, has a sort of fence round him, which even the most thoughtless libertine will not wantonly break down: they jest, turn their back, and go in search of easier associates. A married man has enjoyments, too, growing so immediately out of his duties, that he cannot separate the one from the other; they go on, therefore, thriving together. If my married man have chosen his partner well, and their affairs be commonly prosperous, he is a happier man than a single one, and we may hope the grateful virtues will flourish with him: but if he be fated to great sorrows and misfortunes, then does he only take his portion with the bulk of mankind in every situation: and even then, perhaps, may have

this advantage over most bachelors of any standing, the hope that his calamities are trials, not punishments; in short, that vice and folly have had small share in his suffering. Now, if I baulk my son's inclination for a well-principled girl with a moderate fortune, and induce him to take a lady with an immoderate one, whose person and manners do not please him! whilst I thus deprive him of a virtuous happiness, I am probably only enlarging his means of indemnifying himself for its loss, by criminal and expensive pleasures. The upshot is, therefore, that I would rather behold my son in some worldly trouble, than see him running a career of worldly sin!"

"O certainly, certainly!" rejoined Sir John, "but this is taking an every-day subject, very seriously indeed."

"Not too seriously surely," resumed the Dean, "when we consider that life is made up of every-day occurrences, — accountable life! — I am one, Sir John, who never scruple to preach out of a pulpit, on a fit occasion, fond as I am of my

joke,—so you must excuse me for having just delivered you a sermon. Take this exhortation along with it: don't throw it away unconsidered; but keep it against the time your children come to the age of puzzling you with their love affairs, as mine are now doing me."

Sir John, in sheer benevolence, again pressed the worthy dignitary to consider the risk he was incurring for his son, by the sort of plan he had sketched out for Mrs. Clavering's consideration. If it were agreed to, Mr. Mulcaster, after wasting some years in expectation and nourished affection, might eventually be disappointed. The lady might select some other; or what was more probable, she might not bring him *the large fortune*.

The Dean smiled at the last disappointment, refusing to consider it one, as it was a circumstance most distressing now: yet owning that Sir John had plausible reason on his side, undertook to state his own particular notions, for determining him to persist in his proposal of a guarded intimacy.

"Unless," he said, "marriage is really to be a Smithfield bargain, or a French matter of arrangement, the parties must in all cases run some risk of what you say; and that is an evil which I look upon as inevitable. When they are very young, and have not been long acquainted, nine times out of ten, free admission into each other's domestic society dispels the illusions of the senses and the fancy. They, often then, mutually recede from an engagement: or if one be reluctant to do so, I will engage, that provided the inclination has been proceeding between persons of tolerably fair honour, that reluctance will be found to proceed rather from delicate scruples, combined with lingering partiality, than from that glow of attachment which to be fatal must be ardent, and to be ardent must have been heightened by deliberate deceit. — Now, if this very pair were, instead of rational freedom of action, violently separated; if instead of knowing each other, they were still left to imagine each other; if they could consider them-

selves *unfairly* represented as unworthy; — nay, if even they *were fairly* represented, yet hindered from the only true mode of ascertaining the truth for themselves; — every generous passion of inexperienced youth would range itself under the banner of love: and against the well-meaning, perhaps, and injudicious parents and guardians, there would be an opposing host of apparent acts of injustice and tyranny. Thus the spark that might have gone out of itself, or been trodden out by the kindler, is often blown into a consuming fire by these winds from every quarter of the compass.

"In the present instance, if the young couple eventually divide, by mutually becoming indifferent, why then no harm is done; if by change in the lady only, (and I am free to say from my experience of William's *real* character, not his surface one, that it is the most probable chance,) even so, I am reconciled; since I do believe, a virtuous, and perchance disappointed, affection is, under a higher direction, a salutary check to the irregu-

lar propensities of youth. Mrs. Clavering must say, whether she will take a less risk for her daughter upon the faith of my boy's character, given by those who know him best. So now, after my second homily, I beg to take my leave, and your pardon along with it."

Shaking hands in the most neighbourly manner, the two gentlemen parted. The Dean returned to St. Cuthberts, where being again closeted with William, he related circumstantially all that had passed between him and Sir John Henderson.

William was as much dismayed, when he heard of Dora's possible fortune, as most men would have been, had they heard of their bride's loss of one: and when he learnt the true character and pretensions of Dora's other admirer, he was almost desperate. Familiar reference had been made to this *sighing swain*, (as Lady Henderson had designated him,) more than once before William; and Dora having slightingly described him as quite old, — a person she could not bear, —

and particularly disagreeable, because his name was the same as Mr. Mulcaster's — William heard with astonishment that he was a remarkably agreeable, highly considered, good-looking man, in the very prime of life. So faithful are the portraits given by young ladies, of slighted admirers! so accurately does seventeen estimate the pretensions of thirty!

Every one knows, who knows any thing, that there must always be struggle and sacrifice, and a proper quantity of useless misery and gratuitous despair, in every love matter, or the lover will not believe himself in earnest. Faithful to this laudable custom, Mr. Mulcaster now gave himself up to the extreme of despondency and wretchedness. He saw his fate, he said, as plainly as though he were gifted with second sight; in spite of the exertions of the best of fathers, the kindest, the most generous, &c., he was evidently doomed to never-ending woe. Dora Clavering would be mistress of Aycliffe, and Dora Clavering would marry Sir William Sandford!

The Dean answered this, by humbly entreating, that if he insisted upon her marrying another than himself, at least he would allow her a peer for her £6000 per annum, and her broken faith!

William saw that his father's bantering humour was awakening; and, conscious that his own deep and inexhaustible gratitude, love, duty, reverence, &c. would ooze away faster than Acres's valour, should the Dean actually jest with his distress, he precipitately renewed his thanks and protestations, then hurried to lock himself into his own room.

There, in the midst of books, drawings, flowers, and ribands, either borrowed or purloined from Dora Clavering, he sat down to piece together much that he had just heard, with certain recollections of his first agitating scene with her in the little parlour at Monksden, on the day Lord Francis Fitz James dined there; and to ponder, in consequence, upon the propriety of executing a project, which impatient love dictated,

and the honourable fear of misapprehension, as to his motives, alone combated.

William's heart had been too long pampered by the wish-preventing fondness of four devoted sisters, to bear present contradiction without resistance. He had already learned the necessity and duty of bridling every improper desire; but he was not yet much practised in duly curbing the impetuosity of blameless ones. Quite assured that *he could not live* under his present torment of suspense and conjecture, he determined to seek its conclusion at once, by going direct to the person whom he believed best qualified to set him at ease. This was Lord Francis Fitz James. Many trivial and scarcely noticed circumstances since the memorable day of that gentleman's visit to Monksden, had excited, and now fixed in William's mind a belief that Miss Clavering was the woman to whom Lord Francis was once to have been united; but delicacy hitherto had kept him from hinting such

a suspicion to either party, or to any of their connections. Being aware that each considered themselves as ill-used by the other, he charitably concluded, that much of misunderstanding had been the root of their disunion ; but to attempt re-uniting them was impossible in his present situation. Miss Clavering's marriage with Lord Francis, would make Dora mistress of the Aycliffe estates : — and to Dora thus endowed, he would rather die, than urge his soul's wishes. The world would say he had reconciled the lovers only to become master of this fortune. How then could he sacrifice his sole hope of earthly happiness for the sake of making two other persons happy to whom he owed no such heavy debt of gratitude ?

Much as William *idolized* his old Eton friend, much as he regarded Miss Clavering, deeply as he commiserated the former, he yet had not romance of generosity sufficient for the resolution of helping to reconcile them ; since by doing so, both his own character and

that of Dora might be slandered with the charge of mercenariness.

He tried to feel quite convinced that Miss Clavering's affections were now won by Delaval Fitz Arthur; and that, if in plainly asking Lord Francis for the assurance of his having entirely relinquished her, he forbore to state his own conviction that Miss Clavering's heart had been estranged by some cruel misinformation or misconception, he would not be acting unfairly. Once assured that Dora would never be mistress of Aycliffe, he felt that he could prosecute his suit for her with unceasing ardour and joyful hope; but if he were to remain in doubt of such a desired destiny, to continue in his present trouble of fear and conjecture, he was equally certain, that dread of being suspected of sordid motives would continually palsy his vivid feelings, and, perhaps, lose him Dora's affections from giving him an appearance of caprice and coldness. He, therefore, determined upon seeking an interview with Lord Francis Fitz

James the moment he could slip out of the hospitable duties in which he must share, directly after his youngest sister's marriage. With this determination his soul found rest.

The day was already fixed for this marriage: it was to take place on the 1st of June.

Honoria (to whom we must now return,) had nothing to prepare for that happy day, because Jane was to give her an appropriate dress; and Lady Wearmouth had provided her with a bridal offering. She had but to find smiles for her altered eyes and lips! All at St. Cuthberts was joyful bustle: Lord Culverden with the elder Mr. and Miss Stanhope were there, and Henrietta's lover on short leave from his curacy. Honoria was not sorry to have the excuse of so full a house for keeping aloof; and Jane could not, with all her efforts, get away from Stanhope's relations for an hour's unbosoming talk, in the little sunny room of her friend at the Rectory.

Notes, however, flew to and fro; from which our heroine learnt as much of William's history, as Jane had to tell; and William himself came occasionally to present his woe-begone face, and secure Miss O'Hara's permission to transfer to her kindly breast, after he should lose his darling Jane, all his griefs and comforts, and plans and prospects. Honoria had long felt a sisterly interest in his concerns, and she willingly gave him the promise he sought.

During this period she heard of Captain Fitz Arthur's recovery. After ten days' illness he was again visible. Both William Mulcaster and Mr. Meredith had seen him in the family sitting-room. Sir Everard had got over his alarm about him; and Hylton was cheerful, because he was piously grateful.

Honoria fervently sympathized in such gratitude, although conscious that her share of enjoyment from Fitz Arthur's recovery was taken away. Fitz Arthur would go out, would mix again with friends and neighbours, but to the Rec-

tory he would most likely never come! Even before illness had withdrawn him from his accustomed haunts, she had missed him everywhere — almost at every moment! This was a natural effect of long foregone habit. For above twelve months Honoria had been accustomed to see him start up as if by magic in all her walks, and at every house she went to. He was always coming to her uncle's with books, or interesting letters from correspondents travelling abroad; and when they met in large parties, he was either stationary beside her from the first moment, or at a glance from her eye was the next instant emboldened to take this coveted place. His opinions, his taste, his benevolence, his very time, she had for so long a period felt privileged to draw on at will, that it amazed her to find they were no longer at her command. Well did she remember that no decision of her own mind had ever gained her perfect sanction and adoption, until canvassed and approved by Fitz Arthur; that she had never met his

eyes nor heard the sound of his voice without an emotion of pleasure. His love then, had been the atmosphere of her very soul, the principle of her life, and she had not known it!

Honoria in vain looked beyond the Rectory for consolation and counsel. She could not commit her little history and subsequent feelings to paper; and Mrs. Preston, on whose maternal bosom she would gladly have laid her weeping eyes, was absent — absent for several weeks. Jane Mulcaster was in such a glow of permitted happiness, that it would be almost sinful to shade it, by even transient sympathy with another's sorrow! Honoria was conscious also, that Jane would not only feel for, but act for her. In the eagerness of her affectionate concern, she would do some indiscreet thing, that might be deemed an indelicate one; and if she did so, Honoria's delicacy being compromised, would set the seal to her misery. She must, therefore, bear her grief alone: for having once unburthened her faulty

heart to her uncle, she had never since had courage to renew the subject. Her uncle, too, limited himself to mere needful hints and brief remarks, obviously requiring no reply. He was forced to admit, in spite of his tender nature, that it would be better to let his niece's regrets wither away unmarked, than to nurse them up into enduring life by recurrences to the past, and anticipations of the future. He, therefore, confined himself to information given generally about the Arthur's Court family; and his humbled niece ventured not to ask for more. The same conduct he thought fit to pursue with respect to her possible share of the Indian prize-money.

At Honoria's first mention of this unexpected good luck, he had exhorted her to look on it as a thing extremely doubtful, therefore only fit to be once communicated to him, then as rarely thought of by herself as possible; and certainly never to be discussed with others. Honoria felt that never was she less likely than now to speak of any

matter which might be tortured into a boast intended for a decoy to the father at least of Delaval Fitz Arthur: — and she became doubly resolute, therefore, in her purpose of silence.

Never till now, had Honoria's heart locked up secrets of its own from those dearest to her; indeed not until now, had her young heart possessed any such secrets. Open, affectionate interchange of thought and feeling, was so natural to her, and so much a principle in her character, that she suffered from her present obligation to act differently, and she never met the warm embrace and confiding look of Jane Mulcaster, without a sensation of being false to such generous friendship. Yet other calls of conscience claimed her adherence to the system of concealment. Many were the pangs and struggles of her heart on this subject, and her fast-altering looks betrayed her inward uneasiness.

Dame Wilson, to whom she ever went now with apprehension lest Fitz Arthur

might be with her, dolorously lamented that both her dearest, kindest friends were losing health and spirits. Both were so sadly changed, she said, that she sometimes fancied she was to have the sorrow of outliving her sweet lamb Miss Honor, and Master Delaval too. What then would become of their poor old pensioner? Who would read the Bible to her? Who would heap comforts upon her as they had done?

Honoria's tears alone, frequently replied to these mournful questions, while she hastily hid them with the sacred volume she was either beginning to open or to close. At other times, she would rally back her powers, and assuming one of her old smiles, playfully laugh away the poor woman's sad imaginings. As she never pursued the theme of Delaval Fitz Arthur, which she used formerly to do, Dame Wilson became aware that something more was changed than her young visitor's looks, and she gradually ceased to introduce his name into her conversation.

CHAP. V.

The day arrived which was to take one of its dearest ornaments from St. Cuthberts, in the person of Jane Mulcaster.

The house being full of relatives, Honoria could not pass the previous night there: she went, therefore, betimes in the morning, purposing to dress herself after prayers, and to assist in dressing Jane. But she found Jane's head and heart too full to admit of any distraction between the interval of retiring from morning service, and the solemn moment which was to call her to church. With much emotion, she begged to be left solely to her own thoughts, and her own maid's care, while the indispensable process of adorning her was going on: and not even her surrounding sisters attempted to question so natural a desire. Honoria was inexpressibly affected by the

manner with which Jane, generally so *abroad* in every look and action, seemed at once to draw within herself, awaiting the last family-worship she should join in under that roof, as an abiding daughter. The expression of Jane's countenance indicated a variety of powerful emotions in herself, and awakened many in the friend gazing on her, of which, till that moment, neither of them could have conceived the existence. Actual experience alone, gives us a complete notion of any situation.

Honoria turned away her filling eyes towards Major Stanhope's relations, whom she now saw for the first time.

Lord Culverden looked as though he had been born a nobleman, not like one of new creation. His daughter was pleasing in appearance; and both of them gave reverential attention to the well-selected prayer read by Mr. Wallington; the Dean sparing himself for the more solemn ceremony which was to take place an hour or two later.

Mr. Stanhope was a handsome, fashion-

able young man, with a decidedly libertine expression of countenance; and he was evidently little habituated to such scenes: for at first he stared round; then seeing no one standing except himself, shrugged his shoulders, and cast himself down on the carpet, in a sort of sprawl, against the back of a chair.

Honoria's withdrawn eyes, were soon gushing over her clasped hands, as she knelt, imploring for her beloved friend a blessing on her coming marriage. All great changes are awful; and without being exactly aware of the reason for her present agitation, Honoria felt so heart-burthened, that she listened with throbbing eagerness to the silver tones of the young divine reading prayers. In those soothing tones and precious sentences, it seemed to her as if some angel voice were speaking peace to them all.

Jane, kneeling between William and Stanhope, appeared evidently the subject of her father's most fervent prayer; for his eye, whenever it dropt from its otherwise lifted fixture, turned and hung upon her bending figure.

Prayers over, every one rose silently; some smilingly, some tearfully, yet none sadly. Jane then passed in equal silence from the arms of one to another of this large family assembly. Tears, blushes, and smiles were on her cheeks. She lingered a moment's space on her father's breast, even after he had unlocked his arms from their first firm clasp of her; then waving her hand to remind them that none were to follow, she hastened away to her room.

By the time Honoria's often self-interrupted toilet was finished, every one was ready. She found Jane's own sisters, and her future one, seated in the great saloon with Dora Clavering and Lady Henderson. Stanhope was walking out on the lawn, seriously attending to the earnest conversation of his father; except that he now and then was seen to take out his watch, and look up at the window of Jane's dressing-room, as if he thought to see her there. Henry Wallington in the drawing-room was leaning up against the wall, near Henrietta, talking

to her in his low melodious voice, and receiving answers from the occasional up-darted glances of her prettily sly countenance. His appearance was interesting, and somewhat elegant; but extreme carelessness in his dress rather obscured these personal advantages. Honoria was much pleased with his exterior, and his manner. The five bridemaids, however, (to whom she was to add a sixth,) soon engrossed her whole attention. They were all in the same becoming *costume* of spotless white; all, except Miss Stanhope, were decidedly pretty: but she was young, and elegant, and therefore was not out of harmony with the rest.

Dora Clavering was almost dazzling. Fairer than the transparent lawn of her dress, the silky ringlets of her long light hair, sweeping over cheeks of the loveliest bloom, she looked with her soft blue eyes like some descended angel, blessing the nuptials she was come to grace.

Honoria, who had hitherto seen her only in black, almost started at this bright

apparition: she looked round for William Mulcaster, but strange to say he was not there. William indeed was not visible, until the bridal attendants had assembled in the village church, at the altar, where the Dean stood to receive, and give the benediction to his favourite child. William was then seen leading his sister in. The colour was gone from his cheek, the gay expression from his lips and brow: — anxious tenderness had displaced them. Jane hung on his arm with an emotion which made her proceed slowly; yet the villagers, lining both sides of the little aisle, drew back to let her pass, coupling the respectful movement with low-breathed blessings.

Shaded only by the falling ringlets of her hair, and the lighter folds of a long wrapping veil, every line of her face and figure was traceable: the one was bent down; the other, slightly tremulous. When she took her place at the altar, between her brother and her lover, Honoria felt that there was not in that tranced heart, one thought, one feeling,

which did not belong to Stanhope and her God. A soul devoting itself for this life to the one, and fervently desirous of devoting itself through eternity to the other, shone in the steady fixedness of her unclouded eye. There were no tears, no blushes on her cheek; she evidently thought not, either of her looks, or of beholders: her spirit was in Heaven, with that of him who was then taking the most solemn of all vows by her side.

Perhaps, however, Stanhope was not so wholly rapt from earth as his fair bride; for his eyes, rivetted upon her, seemed to say, that he thought principally of the pure and trusting creature, who was then placing her heart and happiness in his hands for life. He looked as though he never would dishonour such trust: and as his clear, though agitated tones, responded to her low yet distinct ones, every bosom in the church, even those of strangers, felt that vows so repeated, must be taken with the full consent of all that was man within him.

His brother alone looked on the whole

scene as what he pleased to call *humbug;* and beginning to get *horridly bored,* sent his eyes asking round for an answering glance of ridicule. No eye returned the disgraceful look: in truth, none observed it.

The tears and trembling of Honoria were suspended by a sense of awe, whilst she gazed upon Major Stanhope and Jane, so worthy of each other; — so worthily performing this most holy rite. Never had she felt as she did then! — Every circumstance was so affecting and impressive: the brother giving away the fondly-prized sister; the father bestowing a sort of farewell benediction, with the nuptial blessing, upon the best-beloved of his children; the sisters, with whom she had been trained from her first existence, encircling her with a love that seemed loth to resign her, even to the chosen of her heart! and Jane herself, so loved, so loving, — about to quit home, father, brother, sisters, all the tenderest ties of birthplace and of friends, for one man alone — one too, whom she had known intimately, scarcely four months.

How inexplicable, yet how evident is the force of that magnetic attraction, which unites woman's soul to the being and destiny of her lord and husband!

Honoria wondered inwardly, how any marriage could be a gay one: since she found from present experience, that great happiness is always mixed with emotions of awe. She forgot that such marriages as Stanhope's and Jane's, are rare in this world of cruel disappointment; that too many couples go to the altar from motives which demand the stunning accompaniments of glare and noise.

When the ceremony was over, and all that had assisted at it were assembled in the vestry, for the customary forms, Jane's colour was vividly restored: she met the embraces and congratulations of her friends and relations, with strong emotion, but with beaming smiles. Both told of perfect satisfaction, in the act she had just been performing.

Stanhope stood by her side holding her hand, with the doubtful looks of one

too happy to believe himself awake; or as if he feared some of the persons approaching his bride were about to snatch her from him. Eagerness and impatience were in his joyful eyes. He was, in truth, longing for the moment in which he might fold her to his heart without witnesses; and repeat, in fewer words, the same vows of love and cherishment which he had just uttered more temperately at the altar.

Honoria's attention to the bride and bridegroom, was now momentarily taken off by William, whom she saw looking ardently at Dora Clavering, and looking at her for the first time that day. His eyes seemed absolutely drinking in her youthful beauties: and when he withdrew the gaze, he did it with such a deep, thrilling sigh, as caused Dora to look up. At the encounter of their eyes, disordered and palpitating, the innocent girl hastily averted her face; and, by repeated blushes, showed her consciousness of what that speaking gaze had said. Wil-

liam, however, did not approach her; he remained close to Jane.

As the procession of bridal carriages returned to St. Cuthberts, Honoria had leisure to notice the crowd of villagers and of tenantry, lining the road. The church was left full of the better order of humble neighbours. Blessings, and plaudits, and prayers, were heard on every side. Jane's name was never breathed, uncoupled with some grateful or admiring epithet. Even babes in arms were made to join and lift their little hands, in mute benediction, as the bride passed. So dear was Jane to all she lived amongst!

At St. Cuthberts the customary breakfast and breakfast party awaited them. Lady Henderson had kindly staid behind when the others went to church, that she might receive the company. Amongst these were now the eldest Miss Clavering, and Sir Everard Fitz Arthur, with Mrs. Fothergill. Delaval's excuse had been sent the night before; he was still unfit for gaiety.

After receiving a freezing bow from the Baronet, and her usual formal, though friendly meant curtsy from his old-fashioned companion, Honoria's shaking hands could hardly go through their share of distributing the favours. To Dora Clavering and her, was given the office of presenting the knots of white and silver, and the sprigs of orange flower. Miss Stanhope claimed the privilege of bestowing gloves and cake. Jane's sisters were sufficiently occupied in receiving and returning congratulations, and in trying to do the honours of the motley collation covering the table. Jane herself was now shining out in full radiance, whilst fondly displaying massy gold bracelets, clasped with small miniatures of her father and brother. These were William's present, deposited in Honoria's ivory work-case, the night before; and thus the mystery of his many rides to Newcastle, and a temporary disappearance of the Dean's portrait, were accounted for.

The table was surrounded by much

beauty and more gallantry: for all Colonel Mason's officers were there, drinking Mrs. Charles Stanhope's health in bumpers of champagne; after having previously whispered sundry little tendernesses or compliments over the coloured ices they were presenting to surrounding belles.

William Mulcaster, seeing Miss Shafto standing vexedly aloof, (because standing alone,) kindly approached her: "Come, Miss Shafto, allow me to place you. You ladies will make cruel work amongst us poor fellows to-day; you all look so well in virgin white."

"My boy improves under the fair Dora's sceptre," observed the Dean to Honoria, his eye fixed upon Jane, and his lips quivering, even while he spoke cheerfully. "Why, William," he whispered, as the latter advanced from performing this act of charity, "you are absolutely human to-day to the race of Shafto!"

"Faith I could not be such a savage as let that poor animal feel quite put by:

— for even Mr. Tudor begins to think he may give himself airs to her. There he is, with his pupils, talking aloud of his uncle, the Governor of Wimpum-wampum." As it never cost William Mulcaster any trouble to make a name for place or person, he now bestowed one upon a paltry speck in the Indian Sea, and passed on to trifle with the officers. Honoria and the Misses Mulcaster were too busily attending to the refreshment of others, to take any thing themselves; they continued going separately about, occupied in these little services.

During her tour of the table, Honoria remarked, that Dora Clavering had got beside the Dean; and by a number of silent attentions, and the complete absence of her wonted vivacity, was unconsciously marking her tender interest in the agitated parent's approaching pang. Honoria hoped the sweet girl was destined to fill the void Jane's marriage had made. Her eye then ventured to pause upon Miss Clavering. She had not met that young lady, since the day

on which Lady Wearmouth had given the history of Lord Francis Fitz James. She looked at her now, therefore, with stronger interest and more troubled scrutiny.

Miss Clavering was talking to Sir Everard Fitz Arthur; her large liquid eyes smiling at times, through their ordinary shade of pensiveness: tint after tint succeeding on that clear cheek, which even slight emotion ever coloured, though transiently. Still, as the polite old Baronet would have yielded his place to some younger man, Miss Clavering's hand gently detained him. Honoria thought of the banished, nay proscribed Lord Francis; thought, that he, like herself, had forfeited his paradise by his own act; that he, like her, was doomed to seek it again, sorrowing, and in vain. Such thoughts were not to be indulged in a scene like that before her; and our heroine endeavoured to look upon the company more generally.

While making this survey, every one seemed so gay or so happy, that she fan-

cied she alone had looks out of character with the beauty and brightness of all around. In this she was mistaken; for hurry of spirits had restored its richest crimson to her cheek; and that oppression of heart, which in Sir Everard Fitz Arthur's presence, shrouded the starry sparkle of her eyes, only gave an air of sentiment to her countenance, which being attributed to regret at parting from her friend, did not mar the effect of other graces. In defiance, therefore, of inward sadness, and total unconsciousness of looking well, she came in for her full share of open compliment, and silent assiduities. She also heard herself, and other young ladies, discussed.

The speakers were Colonel Mason and Mr. Stanhope, who were standing with their faces turned from her, criticising the party. The Colonel was proudly calling his new acquaintance's attention, to such as he himself deemed the most beautiful; boasting them off, as if they were every one his own property.

Mr. Stanhope, in reply to a remark

upon the angel-like appearance of the two Misses Clavering, uttered something so disagreeably rapturous and profane, about his preference of a lovely woman to the brightest angel in heaven, that Honoria wondered the Colonel could so bravely refrain from looking down to see whether his companion had cloven feet or common ones: and when Mr. Stanhope, after declaring his admiration of the two dark-eyed bridemaids, (meaning Miss Mulcaster and Honoria,) faced round upon our heroine, and nothing daunted by being overheard, began what he called "making love to her" on the instant, her looks at once froze him into silence. She immediately moved away from him with a feeling of abhorrence; no longer thinking it strange that Lord Culverden should have so anxiously desired to see his second son enter a state which binds a man to a pure life, and the highest duties.

As Miss Clavering quitted the breakfast-table, Mrs. Shafto slid from her own place to that she had vacated, and so

got close to Sir Everard Fitz Arthur. While she was contriving to insinuate many a cruel remark upon Miss O'Hara's disturbed looks, attributing them to disappointment in her preposterous views upon Lord Francis Fitz James, one of Mr. Tudor's titled pupils was reading from a newspaper taken out of his pocket, a paragraph stating the marriage by special licence, at her father the Earl of Hexham's house in Manchester Square, of Lady Catherine Eustace with the Marquis of Brinkbourn.

The boyish lordling, quite unconscious that Lady Catherine had been an object of any interest to his entertainers, followed up his reading of the pomp and parade exhibited on this occasion, by much caricature description of the bride's affectation, and the bridegroom's nervous movements, for the edification of such persons as either did not know the parties, or were ready to laugh at an exaggeration of their peculiarities. Mr. Tudor was not present, or he must have called the offender to order.

Jane and Stanhope exchanged a hasty glance, which conveyed to each other how dearly they prized the remembrance of having been blessed at that altar, where they had so often worshipped together; instead of starting up from a dinner-table or tea-table, to pronounce the most sacred of vows, in a room associated only with images of frivolous pleasure. Each of them then looked about for William; but he had already wandered out into the grounds, amongst other deserters from the breakfast.

In another frame of mind, such a keen hunter of the absurd as Mr. Mulcaster must have been arrested by the sight of Mr. Tudor, standing in a most conspicuous situation, as if to challenge attention to his attitude of rapt admiration: alternately staring on a little watercourse rippling over a bit of broken bank, through a collection of flints and running plants; and glancing aslant to see if any one observed him.

William did hear his sonorous murmur of

" Ego laudo ruris amœnæ
Rivos, et musco circumlita saxa nemusq :"

but taking his way musingly towards some large chesnut-trees, apart from the company, he walked for some time under their thick umbrage, lulled unconsciously, almost, into dreamy thought, by the continued hum of numerous insects, attracted thither by the shade and the flowers. There is not a more *summer sound*, than the hum of insects: we need but to think of it, to fancy we feel such a summer sun, and grateful shade, as William Mulcaster was then enjoying.

Abstracted as his attention was from all other objects, it was yet to be caught by a glimpse of Dora Clavering; as lingering behind Lord Culverden and Miss Stanhope, she suddenly turned into a narrow walk by herself. The next instant William was at her side. The serious yet happy ceremony they had so lately witnessed, had subdued the spirits of both: for the first time since their acquaintance, the one spoke and the other listened

with undisguised sensibility. William began, by saying that he was not going to ask for more than he was now permitted by Sir John Henderson's scrupulous notions; he merely wished Dora should know all that his dear father had said to himself and to Sir John, on the subject of his attachment. He would wait submissively, (patiently he durst not say,) for Mrs. Clavering's arrival; after which he would directly sue for sentence to be pronounced upon his hopes; provided, however, circumstances of which his fair auditor must be aware, enabled him to continue his pursuit, without being suspected of a venal aim. All he now sued for, most humbly, was Dora's simple assurance, that however slightly she might regard William Mulcaster, she did not honour Sir William Sandford with any preference.

Dora's voice was scarcely audible, when she gave him the assurance he sought, and tears strove with joyfulness in her eyes: but fearing she was too obviously moved, she prayed him to let

her pass him in return to the lawn; repeating, that she ought not to stay with him there; he ought not to talk to her thus — " at least, not until " — she broke off in great confusion, again trying to pass him, and get away.

William was too much in earnest in his love, and her emotion made her too lovely, for him to grant her petition without more parley. He gently interposed between her and the path, with a passionate burst of admiration at her particular degree of beauty on this memorable day; describing his own violently smothered feelings during the breakfast, and beseeching her to bestow on him some additional testimony of her favour.

Dora, however, resisted herself as well as him; and still entreating for room to pass, at length purchased such permission, by granting him one instant's possession of her trembling hand. When he relinquished this hand, and drew back to give her way, he plucked something from his bosom, which kissing

with great fervour and thanking Heaven for having it his own property, he put back again: but not before Dora saw to her alarm and astonishment, that he had actually got, and was wearing, a picture of her.

How Mr. Mulcaster came by this was now eagerly questioned, and impetuously explained. The culprit had been entrusted with Miss Clavering's bracelet to get repaired, on the clasp of which was a medallion of Dora. This commission had suggested to him the idea of his present to Jane; and the same painter who had copied his father's portrait had privately copied Dora's also.

Upon this explanation, of course, the young lady's anger was excessive for some moments. She insisted upon having the picture given up to her; inveighing against his presumption, his imprudence, — she condescended to say his unkindness, — in "committing" her to an unknown man as the artist was. — No, — she never could, never would pardon

such an offence! William not being over scrupulous with respect to the worshipping of angels, dropt at once upon his knees, confessing his sin, yet imploring, not merely for pardon, but for the picture: protesting, that the painter most likely supposed it to be a likeness of his sister Jane, as he knew the bracelets were intended for her; declaring that no eye, not even that of this darling sister, had ever looked upon it, since it had come into his own hands and taken up its *everlasting* abode in his bosom.

Dora was still resolute: exclaiming, "What would her mamma say, if she heard that her Dora suffered any man to wear her picture unsanctioned by that anxious mother; — one too, that she might so soon be forbidden ——"

William started on his feet, as the breathless sentence was suspended; in momentary disappointment he took the disputed treasure from his neck, and as he put it, yet warm with his heart's glow, into her irresolute hand, proudly said, "I guess how you would have

ended that sentence, Miss Clavering. I see I am no longer to flatter myself. To-morrow then I shall remove beyond all temptation to offend. — The Austrian army, — travel, — any thing, so I get abroad, and keep my wretchedness out of my father's sight."

William's voice actually faltered, for he was preposterously in earnest, and Dora saw he was. Her gentleness and tenderness could not resist the image of his death on a battle-field, or of his lonely sojourn in a foreign land. She hesitated a few moments, then faintly exclaiming, "Cruel! cruel!" resigned the picture. Poor Dora! from that moment the sceptre passed from her hand. Henceforth she might be mocked by a paper crown; but her sovereignty was departed. Equal rights and privileges were virtually acknowledged; "her desire was to be to her husband, and he was to rule over her."

William was however too generous for the immediate exercise of his evident power. He commanded himself suf-

ficiently to print an enraptured kiss upon the inanimate ivory, instead of on the trembling hand which dropt it into his.

Dora fled away, while he was performing this customary rite of a lover's gratitude.

By the time she re-entered the breakfast-room the company were much diminished. The bride and her father had long disappeared; after them, Miss Mulcaster slipped away, and lastly Sophia and Henrietta. The two latter, however, returned again, resuming their appointed task of appearing cheerful and attentive to ordinary guests, with their thoughts far from them, and tears trembling on their cheeks.

Jane was indeed taking leave of all dearest to her in St. Cuthberts. She now sent Stanhope for Honoria, who, at a silent motion of his head, as he just opened and then closed the door, glided out to him. As he hurried her along he frequently pressed her hand, as if his affection for every thing and every

body, at that moment, kept pace with his happiness. He thanked her warmly for all her kindness to his Jane and to himself, during their period of hopes and fears; cordially reminding her that she had promised to come and stay with them as soon as they should be settled for any time. Honoria answered with true sympathy and thanks; then springing from his hand as he opened the door of Jane's dressing-room, ran forward to meet the embrace of her friend.

Jane's face was still bright with happiness, though tears and paleness were again on her cheeks. "It is very foolish of me, Honoria," she cried, shaking off the crowding drops, "but my dear father's farewell, — his blessing, — my dear, dear father's blessing! — and William's wild sorrow, — I feel him clinging to me yet! Darling William! no one but Charles ever loved me half so well!" Affectionate regret choaked the sister's voice, whilst Honoria, moved beyond her power of concealment, pressed that throbbing heart closely against her own,

trying to articulate a cheerful farewell, and a joyous blessing. But her words, too, sunk away in sighs and tears.

At length she was able to say, "This is not sorrow, dearest Jane, — Oh no! — happiness, — happiness in seeing you so happy! I feel certain that you have drawn a blessed lot."

Jane pressed her more fervently in her arms for this speech; then after another interval yielded to natural effusions, began to give her friend some instructions concerning different pensioners of theirs in Edenfell, to whom her purse supplied the means needful for the continuance of Honoria's charitable endeavours. After this, she arranged the mode of their future correspondence, and obliged Honoria to let her name a period for her visit to them; reminded her, that she had made William over to her with all his love cares; and finally entrusted her with a little ring for Dora Clavering, to whom she begged it might be given with her love. "I must not ask to see her here;" she

added, "that would look too particular, as matters stand at present. However, this will just show her what I wish."

Miss Mulcaster now appeared in the door-way; and at that signal, Jane hastily repeated a suffocated "God bless you!" Honoria as hastily, and with more agitation, replied by a silent embrace, then broke away, and hurried down a back staircase into the open air of the garden. Ten minutes afterwards she heard the gallop of the four horses that were carrying Jane and Stanhope from them; and just glimpsed the white favours and pink satin waistcoats of the post-boys, as their carriage flashed along under the trees of the avenue.

In spite of foregone convictions and resolutions, Honoria gushed again into tears. The bells went on ringing their merry peal; distant sounds of shouting and joyful clamour ascended from the hamlet below St. Cuthberts, as the flying equipage divided the re-collected crowd. Honoria knew that every heart

there was giving Jane a blessing as she passed; and her tears flowed the faster, though the sweeter, for such a thought.

Who may properly analyze such tears? Perhaps they gush on similar occasions, partly from mere nervous sensibility over-excited; partly from sympathy with the parties most concerned. We feel that there must be as much grief as joy, in an event which at once removes a sister and daughter, cherished from infancy by her own family, into the family of another. The child may weep, though she goes voluntarily with one dearer to her than all she leaves behind: the parent may grieve, though bestowing her upon the best and kindest of men.

As Honoria was to remain during the rest of that day with Jane's sisters, she had less scruple in absenting herself now; therefore gave her spirits time to compose ere she rejoined those her presence was intended to cheer. She did not re-enter the house until the breakfast party quite broke up, and every body was gone.

The succeeding portion of the day was got through as might be expected: almost silently by Jane's nearest connections; for their hearts wanted rest. Mr. Wallington's conversation helped them to find their surest rest.

This young clergyman spoke a good deal, yet so quietly, that no one observed how much he talked; and though his conversation was tinctured with a strong devotional spirit, serious subjects were insisted upon with such persuasive gentleness, that even worldly minds could not have listened unwillingly; and truly religious ones never failed to remark, that Henry Wallington had but one aim in all he said and did, an endeavour to enlarge the circle of Christian knowledge and Christian love.

William Mulcaster, after having taken leave of his favourite sister, had not returned to the party below, even to seek Dora Clavering. His was a stormy sensibility when really roused; but it luckily left him just sufficient discretion as taught, that at such times a solitary

room, and a locked door, were useful precautions. He remained invisible, therefore, throughout the rest of the day. The Dean tried to be in his usual spirits during dinner, while the servants waited, but not succeeding, he too quickly retired to his own room and his own mode of finding comfort; and the remainder of the family feeling the same inclination, Honoria returned home.

CHAP. VI.

VERY soon after the departure of her friend, a "sort of waveless calm, the slumber of the dead," appeared in Honoria's thoughts to have settled upon her village, for she herself shrunk from society, yet felt as if society had withdrawn from her. Arthur's Court was closed against her; Hazeldean was still without its kindly mistress and good-natured daughters; Ravenshaw was solitary; to Shafto Place she was resolute never to go, and Mrs. Shafto seemed well-pleased to let her have her humours: for though it suited that lady's plans for her absent Matilda, to flatter her and Mrs. Meredith a while longer, she contented herself with lamenting, that "they were not popular with Miss O'Hara, therefore would not incommode *her* by invitations;" and as

Mrs. Shafto really never did include her in any proposed party, Honoria had only to suffer her aunt's angry reproaches for having drawn upon herself this merited displeasure. She listened meekly, and there the punishment ended.

To Monksden, Honoria felt a repugnance to go, at which she was ashamed: for the sight of Miss Clavering ever reminded her, that she had presumptuously calculated upon a degree of power over all the hearts in Arthur's Court, which events were proving she did not possess; yet the sight of Miss Clavering's deeply thinking and feeling countenance, ought to have gratified one who tried to believe she would be happy, if once Delaval Fitz Arthur were really so.

Honoria, however, distempered by the consciousness of deserving some suffering and humiliations, exaggerated her fault and its chastisement, by translating Miss Clavering's obvious advances towards greater intimacy into mere compassion for her certain loss of Fitz Arthur's affection, and her supposed disappoint-

ment from Lord Francis Fitz James. She could not then be always ready to meet those courteous advances. She even looked joylessly upon the passing vision of future competence, as she remembered the unsettled claims from which she might derive so much advantage through the friendly agency of Lord Wearmouth. Unnoticed by herself, deep dejection was stealing over her looks as well as her spirits, robbing both, of their glow and brightness, and exciting various speculations as to its cause.

"How that pretty creature falls off!" was echoed from lip to lip of every idler. "Has any thing happened to Miss O'Hara?" asked every gossip. Mrs. Shafto had explanations, conjectures, insinuations, at every body's service, according to their degree of intimacy with the victim. Nothing could be more plain, she endeavoured to make people understand for themselves, than that it was all owing to the very inconsiderate civility of the Dowager Lady Wear-

mouth, the quizzing notice taken of her by that eccentric Lord Francis, and the poor young woman's excessive vanity. Nothing could be more certain than that she was actually going into a consumption from mortification and disappointment. More charitable folks concluded that the silly girl was love-sick; and Lord Francis, of course, had the full credit of her wasting.

Still striving after what was right, even while thus suffering, Honoria fulfilled her promises to Mrs. Charles Stanhope, by duly visiting her pensioners, and providing for their wants out of the funds left in her hands. She went as usual with her uncle to the bedside of the sick, spirited the cotter's children up to their little tasks of needle-work and catechisms; and tried to be as useful and cheering as formerly, when at home.

But our spirits are not at our own command: and no longer gay enough to disregard the inflictions of Mrs. Meredith's temper, she sometimes indulged

herself by stealing away from domestic storms, into the peace and loneliness of Hazeldean. There she might securely loiter about, either with a book, or given up to wandering thought.

Mrs. Preston's far-famed flower-beds were now in their first summer beauty: her strawberries and her honeysuckles thronged the garden with birds, bees, and butterflies: every tree or vacant spot of wall was overhung by the rich flowers of the one; to which the delicious smell of the other's fruit added a more grateful fragrance. From the sweet briar hedges, (now full of their small bright roses,) many a blackbird sang his most joyous song. But all else was silent: the place itself was solitary. The house was partly shut up, to exclude the sun from the furniture; the strawberries were perishing for want of hands to gather them; and many of the remoter walks of the little shrubbery were getting thick with weeds. The gardener was old and indolent, and always needed looking after. Every thing

told that the mistress of this pretty place was absent. In truth, the whole place was beginning to have that deserted appearance which formed a painful contrast with its natural beauty, and which is peculiarly saddening to hearts already oppressed.

At first Honoria felt this impression distressingly; afterwards, with the waywardness of a sick mind, she began to love its mournfulness. All spots beyond and around Hazeldean, had in them the hum of life, as well as the glow of summer; their buzz and business importuned her: these, seemed to ask for a pleasureable feeling in herself, and finding none within her, she turned for seclusion and melancholy contemplation to Mrs. Preston's weeping bowers.

During more than one of these rambles, Honoria had been startled by the sound of hastily retreating footsteps; and over-busy fancy had at such moments made her heart beat. Upon one occasion this fancy seemed verified in its imaginings.

Whilst sitting down to rest among the ruins yet standing in the little demesne, a deep and audible "Alas!" escaped her lips; immediately after which, she heard some one forcibly break a way through the matted ivies behind her, and leap from a fragment of wall, down into the road-path below.

She ventured not to rise, and look after this person; for she was persuaded it had been Fitz Arthur, come like herself to think of dear Mrs. Preston in her own deserted garden. But did she think only of Mrs. Preston there? Oh! how differently did her heart answer that question. — Upon hurrying to the house, and sounding the old servant left in charge of it, she heard that Capt. Fitz Arthur had indeed been talking to her not half an hour before; and that he often came to enquire after the ladies, or to get a book.

It had been Fitz Arthur then! Honoria wearied herself with fancying why he should leave a beloved home, and the attractions at Monksden, for soli-

tude and Hazeldean. Did he retain enough of his old affection, to come there, merely because it was in these scenes he had spent so many hours with her? At that seducing idea she checked herself; conscious that now she ought to grieve over, not cherish, every testimony of such lingering love.

In similar struggles to disbelieve, nay wish to disbelieve, what subtle feeling told her was still the state of Fitz Arthur's sentiments towards her, did Honoria consume her strength both of body and mind; so that even those who saw her the oftenest, observed a daily alteration in her. William Mulcaster frequently looked at her earnestly, and affectionately, as though longing to ask what was preying on her damask cheek; but as often he checked the impulse, though he purposely introduced the name of Lord Francis Fitz James. One morning he rode over to Edenfell, to say he was going to take a run up to the south, and get a peep at Jane. Major Stanhope and she were in a temporary nest

near Tunbridge, ere they went on a visit to Culverden, and he meant to have four and twenty hours of enjoyment with them ere they took wing. He then carelessly added, that he had just heard from his friend Fitz James, who had returned from saying good-by to his family in Ireland, and was going immediately to Lisle: he should, therefore, manage to see *him* also. Might he say that Miss O'Hara honoured His Lordship by any remembrance?

Honoria's contradictory manner at this question puzzled William completely: the sudden cheek-glow announced an emotion, which the lifeless expression of her eyes did not credit; and the reply she made to his question was exactly such as the calmest heart might have dictated. He determined however to do his best for her, and for himself, during the interview he had been impatiently waiting for. He had long since written to Lord Francis Fitz James, merely asking leave to put one important query to him in person,

which replied to, he would not urge a single question further. Lord Francis's equally brief letter of consent was now hurrying him to London. As His Lordship had expressed great anxiety not to be kept waiting, being eager to get out of England, William received it as a good omen: his spirits, therefore, were all afloat again. For, besides this happy augury, Mrs. Clavering was arrived: she had come the day before the one he was speaking on, and that morning he had been admitted at Monksden; and Mrs. Clavering had received him most graciously, though of course nothing particular was said on his part, (but he knew that every thing was to be told to her by Sir John Henderson the instant of her arrival,) and Dora had looked the most delighted creature on the face of the earth; and Miss Clavering had given him the kindest smile and squeeze of the hand at parting, thereby tokening that she was his friend, and that he need not despair. Sir William Sandford's visit was declined!

In short, after he had been to town and settled some material business there, he trusted he might speak boldly out to Mrs. Clavering herself.

Honoria did not seek to hear what that material business was of which William spoke; for she knew that he loved harmless mysteries, that he had the foible of liking to be wondered at and thought of. She listened to all he said with sisterly interest, and with a sister's openness expressed her warm sympathy in all his concerns.

William went on rhapsodizing, as though he mistook her for his favourite sister. Boasting that he had *made his* Dora promise to think of him every morning at a certain hour, when he knew she must be twining those silken ringlets round her lovely fingers; and when she might fancy him, standing amongst his subjects of the stable and the kennel.

Honoria noticed his authoritative phrase of *made*, instead of the expectant suitor's humble *entreated*, and she warned him that the little appropriating pronoun

my, was somewhat premature, as he and Dora were situated.

William faced round upon her with some of his original petulance. "Not in the least, fair lady! — If once a woman lets me call her mine, and I like to call her so, she's mine to all eternity, spite of parents or poverty: — neither can do worse than turn us adrift without provision. Well then; it's only getting a good weather-proof cave by the sea-side, and we shall have a house over our head, with food and physic running past our very door. As for clothing, provided the sands be smooth, our progeny may run about without shoes and stockings. You'd see, Miss O'Hara, what a race I'd raise upon sea-fish and sea-salt, and bare legs!"

Honoria's natural mirthfulness, could not resist this strange picture of domestic bliss; and she laughed in defiance of her heavy heart. She recovered herself, however, with a proper censure of his avowed principle respecting parents; and having received a duly penitent or

rather explanatory answer, as satisfactory to her scruples, as creditable to William's serious opinions, he prepared to depart.

Honoria's hall of audience for her friend's brother, was her own small garden: thither they regularly betook themselves from the common parlour, when he had any thing particular to say about himself; and as the whole of its little space could be seen by those sitting in the parlour window fronting the hill, she felt the scene not too secluded for sauntering with an intimate friend of the other sex.

As she strolled with William to the spot where he had left his horse, he amused himself with ordinary topics, investing them with so much of the comic, that she was completely beguiled for the time of all her sadness; she staid to see him vault as gracefully as gaily upon the back of his steed, then, as he galloped off, turned homewards.

What was her mixed emotion of relief and regret, when on entering the house, she found Delaval Fitz Arthur had come

and gone during her absence! She learnt from Mrs. Meredith that he had said it was the first visit he had paid since his illness. He saw Miss O'Hara from the window, but would not have her called in:—his visit was to his worthy pastor. —He was forbidden to stay out long; —he left, therefore, his thanks for her enquiries through Mrs. Fothergill and others, and so had gone. Mrs. Meredith maliciously added, "she could see by his manner how offended he was at Miss Honor's worthless conduct in running about after the Ravenshaw folks, and the Mulcasters, with their lord's son; so new-fangled as she was! never going to Arthur's Court now—and once she was never easy out of the old place!"—Mrs. Meredith was sure it would serve her right if Sir Everard never asked her again within the doors.

Honoria's ashy look, as her aunt, having vented her spleen, dashed out of the room, induced Mr. Meredith to say a few words of mingled soothing and exhortation. He kindly said, that by this

early visit, he must suppose Delaval Fitz Arthur wished them to understand him restored to his former merely friendly connection with them: that, consequently, Honoria must curb her feelings even of compunction, and however painful the effort, try to meet him as usual, or rather to meet him without expecting more than friendly notice from him, or appearing to wish for more. — She must, he added, above all things, carefully keep from every one the knowledge of what had passed between herself and Sir Everard; for if things were not yet concluded between him and Miss Clavering, the suspicion of a previous and recent attachment on his side might influence the lady to disappoint Sir Everard's evident wishes. And to Sir Everard, Honoria more especially owed reparation for her fault. — How would she answer it to her conscience hereafter, if by any rash or self-seeking confidence, she were a second time to frustrate a father's honourable plans for the happiness of a beloved son?

As Mr. Meredith somewhat pointedly put this question his niece's heart swelled for a moment with its original infirmity: she believed at that instant, that she would rather die proudly, than meanly seek Fitz Arthur's love again, either by one imprudent, or one intentional disclosure. From Mrs. Preston, therefore, his warmest advocate, (though her sole maternal adviser,) from her the secret should be strictly guarded. With a quivering lip she gave her uncle the promise he seemed to solicit, and ceasing to speak, took up some needle-work.

Could Honoria have known what ideas the sight of her and her companion had suggested to Fitz Arthur, as she was unconsciously traversing her small garden under his eye, how bitter would have been her regret, at the unlucky chance which had so given her to his view and his speculations! The reports circulating round the neighbourhood, concerning her and Lord Francis Fitz James, had reached even to him. Every one who mentioned Miss O'Hara, spoke of her remarkably altered looks

and spirits: he had now ocular proof that part at least of this account was true. She was said to have lost her colour and become thin, ever since the departure of Lord Francis Fitz James from the county. Fitz Arthur knew Lord Francis was gone; and he knew not how far his seeming admiration of Honoria, and their acquaintance, might have proceeded before and during his own illness, since she visited at Ravenshaw where His Lordship was staying. Why was the village report not to be credited? What else might account for the alteration in Miss O'Hara? Alas, nothing. What was more likely than that one of Honoria's imaginative nature, should be captivated at once by Lord Francis's dazzling exaggerated reputation, his fine person, and singular cast of character. The little mystery of his appearance at Arthur's Court, followed by the anonymous volume of poetry; nay the subsequent romance of their May morning rencontre, was sufficient to kindle the fancy, and prepare the heart for a vivid impression.

He now saw Honoria walking in earnest conversation with Lord Francis's known intimate, he saw her give him a sealed letter, — it might be to Lord Francis; and as she smiled brightly, whilst giving it, most likely all her changed looks were only the consequence of anxiety from the opposition of her lover's family. Fitz Arthur turned heart sick and bodily sick as this idea crossed him; and at that moment he had abruptly taken leave.

Honoria's resolution to devour her secret sorrow quickly lost its momentary alloy of pride, returning to the better character of self-humiliation. Every thing she heard of those at Arthur's Court corroborated her uncle's opinion of Sir Everard's views, and gave more mortal wounds to that hope which is so long of dying in a young breast.

Whilst the Misses Clavering remained at Monksden, Sir Everard had been a constant visitor there; evidently adding his assiduities, to the perhaps reluctant ones of his son: and when those ladies were gone with their mother to Aycliffe,

she heard that Delaval Fitz Arthur had actually gone after them by express invitation.

Mrs. Fothergill, who gave this information, had duly called at the Rectory, and duly wondered why they saw so little of their favourite Miss Honor! and Mr. Meredith had dined at Arthur's Court as usual, treated as kindly there as usual, but no invitation came to Honoria: she saw that once familiarly dear family only at church.

It was Honoria's punishment to sit in the very next pew to theirs, during morning and afternoon service. It was afterwards her trial to walk slowly by her uncle's side, as she was wont, in company with Sir Everard Fitz Arthur through the churchyard; who no longer conversed with her as he was wont.

This pertinacity of resentment was her severest trial: yet it did not re-awaken unwarrantable indignation. She felt bowed to the dust, by the consciousness, that after having sacrificed her own best affections for the sake of a triumph over

Mrs. Shafto, she had no longer the smallest right to be proud. But the absence of pride, did not insure the absence of regrets: — often, whilst feeling her banishment from hearts most precious to her, did she think of Dryden's lines, describing to a punished spirit its vain attempts to re-enter its former body: —

" Then, like some wretch shut out from lodging,
Shall thy groans be answer'd by whistling winds."

She felt this to agony, whenever Sir Everard was near her.

Who may paint the wretchedness of her, who sees eyes in which she has once loved to sun herself, passing over her in cold serenity! clouds, even storm clouds there, would be preferable to such benumbing mockery. Honoria's young blood seemed freezing under the changed aspect of the still loved, still honoured Sir Everard: and when she saw Hylton lifted out of the carriage, conscious that she must no longer run to assist him, or to receive the pressure of his thanking hand, her heart felt actually breaking. —

Towards Delaval she never looked: in the presence of his father she would have considered a single glance as a crime.

In this desolation of the soul nothing cheered her, except happy communications from her friends.

William Mulcaster was returned, bringing with him long letters from Jane, and a vivid description of her Eden life at the Briars with no one but her husband. Jane's pen was eloquent in praise of her Stanhope's kindred; for they had all paid her visits: and as she was immediately going to Culverden, into a whirl of visiting and new people, she desired Honoria to fancy her very soon, as not merely the happiest of all human beings, but the busiest and the gayest.

William's mission proved more successful than the one at Lisle, which Lord Francis Fitz James was about to join. — He had but two points to ascertain, whether Lord Francis were indeed the early lover of Miss Clavering, and if so, whether he never meant to renew his suit. If His Lordship declined giving him such a pledge, William was heroically

determined to be as romantic and absurd as any other lover under five and twenty, and retire from the contest for Dora Clavering, lest he should prevent her forming some alliance better suited to a great heiress. We will not say what pleasing visions of recall, in spite of this formidable fortune, floated before his mental eye, while a thousand memories of dear, preferring looks and words throbbed in his heart. — Suffice it, William was in earnest, in his wish to marry Dora without the Aycliffe estates; and *believed* himself in earnest, while imagining that pride and generosity would enable him to resign her.

The young man's disinterestedness was amply repaid by the rapture with which he heard Lord Francis confess his past engagement with Miss Clavering: abruptly adding, that his friend might safely propose for the younger sister, as he Lord Francis was immediately going abroad, purposing firmly, to live and die in single blessedness.

William, by his own proposal, was

bound to scrutinize no further; though by the looks and manner of his friend, nay, by the purpose declared in his answer, he was led to suspect that Agnes Clavering yet lived in his heart. He was ashamed of his own unwillingness to probe the wound which perhaps such probing might heal: for the deterring cause was a species of selfishness, honourable as it partly was. — He dreaded the reconcilement and marriage of these former lovers. Luckily, he remembered that Dora had lately said, she hoped her sister would one day give her Delaval Fitz Arthur for a brother; and that recollection terminated his short hesitation. He shook Lord Francis most cordially by the hand, thanking him for the kind interest he expressed in his fate; and heartily wishing that he saw him a happier man than he feared he was leaving him, hurried away.

As Lord Francis's avowed intention of spending a single life was a death blow to the hopes and wishes of any young lady captivated by his graces

William Mulcaster trusted that Honoria was really as indifferent to his titled friend, as she tried to have it believed; and being of a temper which looks on the bright side of every thing, soon convinced himself of her heart's entire safety. Her manner when he spoke of Lord Francis, (though of course their subject of conversation was not stated,) completely satisfied him; and he left her with unclouded spirits.

By this time, midsummer was past; it was the season of sparkling mornings, and balmy evenings. The former, Honoria had ever been accustomed to banquet on alone; being the earliest riser at the Rectory; ever hastening to meet the first breath of the grass and flowers under the dews and the sunshine of that vivifying hour.

Her summer evenings when not engaged, were always at her uncle's disposal; and in their long walks together, through the bowery trees of a green lane of peculiar beauty and wildness, they were wont formerly to be overtaken

or met by Delaval Fitz Arthur taking his solitary evening ride. The mixture of eagerness and embarrassment with which he used to throw himself off his horse, and lead it by their side, were ever present to Honoria as she now trod that sequestered lane, listless and spiritless: for there Fitz Arthur came no more. She remembered all he had ever talked of there; she remembered the pleasure with which she used to see him approaching, the regret with which she saw him turn from them at parting in another direction; and she wondered how she could have remained so long in ignorance of his power over her peace.

Now, though she knew that in this lane she was the least likely to encounter him, she loved to haunt its familiar paths; nay, habit and a sickly hope, kept her constantly in perturbed expectation of his appearance. If a horse's hoofs were heard behind, she would turn pale with expectation and fear: — the horse and its rider would reach her and pass on: — the hope and the pang would pass away with them.

In those sweet, still evening walks, for it was a lovely summer, rarely was her uncle's calm and contemplative conversation broken in upon by acquaintance or wayfarer. The sound of their own slow steps up and down the lane, the rustling of a bird amongst the bushes, the chirp of a grasshopper, and the occasional footing of a solitary ass grazing on the plentiful herbage in the dry ditches on either side their path, were the only sounds which disturbed the stillness of the place. Often did they linger there, till long after the sun had set, and the faint evening star had become a bright light in the purpling sky.

In these walks, without discussing the subject upon which Mr. Meredith saw his niece's thoughts were principally stationed, he found opportunities of enforcing many calls to practical piety; endeavouring so, to prevent Honoria from yielding that indulgence to herself, which unfits a person for society and its duties. He was careful now,

never to introduce the subject of his own early attachment: condemning himself for ever having allowed his young niece to see that he yet retained a tender and mournful recollection of his first love. He justly reprobated his own weakness on that occasion; and steadily confined the pensive reminiscences of his youth, to perish in his thoughts as they arose, instead of uttering them and dilating them by conversation.

As visiting the sick was one of the active duties he sought to keep his niece in the exercise of, one evening, on returning home through the village, he left her at the door of Dame Wilson's lodging, bidding her sit with the poor Dame until he had seen and transacted some business with a churchwarden.

It was so completely dusk, that on entering Mrs. Wilson's room Honoria found the window-shutters already closed, and a little wood-fire burning, by which even in summer the poor woman's messes were warmed, ere she could safely take them. By the fitful blazes of the lighted

sticks, she saw Delaval Fitz Arthur was there. He started up from his seat by the Dame's bed, with a fevered cheek, and distressed look, as if seeking escape; then all at once quelling himself, and his flush of colour changing into paleness, remained standing.

Honoria would have retreated, if she had retained the power; but her limbs refused their support, and she seated herself in silent trembling.

Something Fitz Arthur asked in agitated tones about Mr. and Mrs. Meredith; something too Honoria replied: but neither of them could have told the next moment what either of them had been saying. They were equally unsensed by emotion; and merely heard the murmur of each other's voices, confusing questions and answers. Dame Wilson, as if to relieve their evident embarrassment, began speaking of herself.

While she did so, Honoria unwarily kept pushing the low stool on which she sat, further and further from the neighbourhood of Fitz Arthur. The room

was small, the bedstead narrowed it; Honoria heeded not what she was driving back upon, when at a sudden cry from Dame Wilson, she found herself closely pressed in the arms of Fitz Arthur. Something tightened and withheld her struggle to get loose.

"You were on fire!" he could with difficulty articulate, as finding he had extinguished the flames, he withdrew the woollen rug which he had snatched from the Dame's bed for that purpose. "Thank God!" Staggering a few paces, he sought to rally back his powers of body and mind, but at length dropt on a bench near the door which he could not reach.

Honoria, meanwhile, trembling violently from head to foot, not from a sense of recent danger, but from a mixture of amazement, confusion, hope, and bitter-springing thoughts, stood where he had left her, seeing without looking at her smouldered clothes, her heart labouring with agony almost beyond its power of endurance.

All that her uncle had said, all that her saner moments of self-sacrificing repentance had shown her to be her duty, all was now struggling with, and trying to overcome her passionatelonging to throw herself at her dear deliverer's feet, and there make confession of her fault and her penitence.

Mrs. Wilson kept uttering various pious ejaculations for her sweet lamb's preservation, and for the dear Captain's happy presence of mind: but neither Fitz Arthur nor Honoria heard her.

Fitz Arthur wiped the faint drops from his forehead, and raised himself with difficulty. Honoria guessed he was about to go away, and wringing her clasped hands with a look of absolute wildness, exclaimed, "O do not think ill of me for not thanking you yet. At least I may own that I am grateful. You have saved my worthless life, and I ——" A convulsive gasp interrupted her.

Fitz Arthur laid his agitated hand on the lock of the door; his voice shook

even more than hers had done. "Happy —too happy in having done so!" he cried; "and if I could add to that, the procurement of every wish of your heart, I would buy such privilege with my whole heart's blood!" As he spoke, he vanished: and Honoria sinking at once upon Dame Wilson's bed, flung herself over it, forgetful of every thing but Fitz Arthur, giving long way to successive floods of tears.

Dame Wilson felt that something was not right. She had observed the sad change in the looks of both her young friends, and coupling that circumstance with the present scene, she concluded that a mutual attachment, frowned upon by Sir Everard in consequence of Miss O'Hara's want of fortune, was at the bottom of their late estrangement.

She did not presume to question or remark upon what had occurred; and Honoria did not offer any explanation. Knowing that Mrs. Wilson's affection for both parties concerned, would make her discreet, she cared little for this ex-

posure of her feelings before her only. Honoria no longer felt that utter desolation of spirit which had withered every thing in her path while imagining herself banished from Fitz Arthur's heart; instead of it there was a maddening struggle within her, which nearly unsettled reason itself. She saw that Fitz Arthur still loved her fondly, exclusively; yet a cruel duty forbade her to let him know that she could now receive on her knees those vows she had once rejected.

What torment to have happiness within our reach, yet may not seize it! — What a triumph is such resolute self-denial, over human weakness, through the strength of Christian principle!

Again and again the floods of Honoria's tears were stayed and renewed; as often as she dried her eyes and quelled her smothering sobs, so often did they gush forth again with redoubled violence. At last, quite exhausted, she sunk into dejected silence, remaining hushed, apparently tranquillizing.

The sound of her uncle's trick of a cough announced his approach down the little street; Honoria rose, and stretching out her hand to the poor bedridden Mrs. Wilson, said, with an attempt at smiling, "I have been a bad attendant on you this evening, dear Dame; but I will come to-morrow and bring a book, I know you are not displeased with me for being so overcome after—."She could not utter the projected excuse.

"Displeased! dear honey!" cried Mrs. Wilson, respectfully kissing the trembling hand clasping hers. "I bless you every hour of my life! and to-night I shall pray long and sorely for you and dear Mr. Delaval."

Honoria had not voice to answer. She guessed the good woman's mistake, and lightly printing the withered cheek with an agitated kiss, she broke away, and rejoined her uncle.

Whilst walking homewards, she told Mr. Meredith as briefly and calmly as was possible for her, what had just occurred. He sighed more than once

during her hurried recital, and when she concluded, allowed himself to ejaculate, "Poor Delaval!" then turned his attention to her blessed escape from personal injury, giving due praise to her conduct throughout the whole scene.

Honoria had hoped that she might have been "righteous over-much" on this trying occasion; that is, carried her notion of sacrifice too far: but no expression of her uncle's encouraged the fallacious hope; she therefore dismissed it as dangerous to her future rectitude under similar temptation, (should such ever occur,) and pursued her way home in silence by his side.

Fitz Arthur's voice, however, still rang in her ear: she repeated his last words to herself incessantly. But for those words, she might have misunderstood the meaning of his now pale and now flushed cheek, now eager and now averted look: she might have attributed each to proud resentment.

Had she done so, she would have erred as poor Fitz Arthur did: at this

same moment, he was persuaded that she was pining away for another. Let us not say that the eyes are faithful tablets of our souls! He had gazed upon Honoria's eyes, yet saw not in their watery mirrors his own image reflected. Common report had blinded him perhaps. If he thought she had the air of one abandoned by the object of her preference, and that her manner expressed a kindlier sympathy with his disappointment, he was deterred from attempting to soothe, in the hope of ultimately winning the heart left thus sorrowful and unclaimed, by the knowledge of his father's wishes in a different quarter, and of his powerful resentment at her late conduct. Delaval was not capable of seeking a doubtful good, in opposition to a dear and justly irritated parent. He felt that a veil of separation had fallen between them for ever; but whether that conviction would speedily enable him to fulfil all his father's wishes, he abruptly refused to question.

CHAP. VII.

After the painful meeting at Dame Wilson's, Honoria was careful to make strict enquiry of who were within, ere she entered any more of the village houses: she ceased also her solitary visits to Hazeldean: and being ill-provided with the means of making distant visits, (after duly explaining to Lady Henderson, and all who had followed the kindly example of the Mulcaster family,) she secured to herself almost total exemption from the torments which general society inflicts upon a burthened spirit.

To St. Cuthberts, however, she still went gladly. Heart and happiness were there once more, in spite of Jane's disappearance from the affectionate circle: for William Mulcaster's frequent visits to distant Aycliffe were not discouraged

by Mrs. Clavering, though she had not yet definitively answered the important question he went regularly to ask; and Captain Barrington was come. It was delightful to Honoria to become acquainted with the favourite son of Lady Wearmouth, and to witness the happiness of Isabella.

Captain Barrington was one of those rare characters which carry into mature years the charm of childhood: and, like a child, he caught the affections at the first moment. Had he not possessed this engaging simplicity of manner and expression, he would have been awful: for his integrity was unbending, even to sternness; and whenever he was called upon to solve any moral or mental difficulty, he did it with the ease and power with which a strong man carelessly lifts the load that bows down a weaker one. Not a great reader, but habitually a thinker; his information was not multifarious, yet was it richly increased by sound deductions from facts and principles, and by acute enquiry of his own

mind when subjects did not appear to him satisfactorily concluded. At sea, he was the ablest seaman and the most efficient officer: kind to his men, though inflexible in the determination of being obeyed: brave as the bravest on his favourite element. On shore, Captain Barrington was all the guileless, joy-cherishing, credulous sailor: the easiest person mocked and cheated possible; the least resentful of wrong or ridicule. On shore, he was also the idlest fellow breathing; for there he gave himself holiday. He was now generally to be seen at high noon, lying along the grass out of doors, without hat, or other neck-cloth than a loose silk handkerchief, in the sun, or under the shade, at hap-hazard: sometimes with a book; oftener with livelier idlers sauntering round him, to whom he kept calling out, "Go on, — tell me something else, — talk away."

A fine manly figure, carelessly considered by himself, and handsome features marked by the small-pox, were

animated by an expression of perpetual good-humour, and the inclination to be pleased. He was accustomed to say, laughingly, on his mother's authority, that he should have been just as good-looking a fellow as William Mulcaster, had it not been for this "rough-casting." However his face was fitter to weather powder, and smoke, and salt water; and as Isabella did not mind it, he cared not a rope's end about the matter. — She had beauty enough for both.

Isabella's beauty indeed was much in her favour; for by the magic power of a carnation complexion, soft features, and a lovely shape, she looked several years younger than Captain Barrington; who, from a greater proportion of thought and less of good looks, appeared older than he really was.

To Isabella this was a matter of consequence, suffering as she did from a timid fear of being considered foolish or blameable in her attachment to one four years younger than herself. To Barrington it was of no moment what-

ever. He loved Isabella thoroughly, he knew her character thoroughly, he believed he knew his own thoroughly; he was therefore assured, that whilst Isabella's disposition and affection remained unaltered, his love for her would not change with her person. As he never would believe failure in a duty possible, it never was so to him; and Isabella, once his wife, would consequently be as sure of his everlasting love and fidelity, as though both principles were substances, and that substance rock.

Whilst Honoria looked on at what passed around her, she could not forbear remarking the very different fashion, in which the same feeling dressed itself in different characters. William Mulcaster's passion for Dora Clavering was an ardent, obvious passion; his delight was to get her and himself engaged in equally animated discourse. — Alone, or in company, Major Stanhope's attachment had been shown, by an embarrassed eagerness and watchfulness: in Jane's company, he was so wholly occupied with

anticipating her wants and wishes, that he rather waited upon, than associated with her. Henry Wallington and Henrietta rarely sought each other in society, but stole away to shades and seclusion, ere they suffered their hearts' deep-seated sympathies to rise and swell on the surface. Captain Barrington with open, honest fondness, already called Isabella his wife, and as if they were securely settled together, was content to lie whole mornings at her feet, hearing her read to him, or urging her to talk on with others for his amusement, whilst he either gazed up in her lovely face, or lay with closed eyelids, drowsily and delightfully conscious that she was near him.

After Honoria became better known to him, he often put her into requisition for a song in the open air. Like most sailors, (even those born in the most refined rank of life,) he loved simple melodies, and cared little for such as required science and skill in the performer: a sweet voice, true feeling, natural taste, and the harmony of sound and sentiment together,

in the words and music of the song; — these were the objects of Captain Barrington's admiration, and Honoria's singing was perhaps always perfect in every one of his requisites. It had been once her task and her pleasure so to gratify Hylton Fitz Arthur; and now, when she sung to Captain Barrington, the recollection of those happy days would frequently mar the expression of a gay song, or increase the pathos of a sad ballad, beyond her own power to pursue it without tears. One of her solaces was to talk with the amiable sailor of his mother, and of her own relations in India: although not likely to see the latter for several years, it was agreeable to know, from description, that not only her uncle but his youthful wife were persons worthy to be held in dear regard.

Another of Honoria's enjoyments at St. Cuthberts, was to cherish remembrance of her friend Jane, in the home she had formerly brightened: a fine whole length portrait of her by Lawrence often suffused her eyes with a

mixture of regret and satisfaction. Sophia Mulcaster was gone to share in the bustle of the bride's presentation at court; after which, Honoria was expected to be ready for Mrs. Charles Stanhope's summons, whenever she was fixed in a stationary residence; and to this visit she looked as to a haven from many pains and dreads. At a distance, she thought she could bear many things, which to endure, being present with, seemed insupportable: such was the termination of the lagging, yet evidently certain union of two disappointed hearts, attracted by similar suffering and congenial worth. Honoria knew from William Mulcaster, that Lord Francis Fitz James was actually gone to Lisle; so that every thing was over between him and Miss Clavering. She knew, too, from common report, that Delaval Fitz Arthur was much oftener at Aycliffe now: she could not doubt that he was thus teaching himself to regard its mistress with the affection necessary for their future happiness. By the time, therefore, that Miss Cla-

vering's heart should learn the lesson of love for him, (if it had not done so already,) by that time Honoria's fate would be sealed; for the marriage of Fitz Arthur would be the conclusion of all her hopes and wishes. Yet she was sensible to one strong wish, totally distinct from expectation, or wish of winning back the heart she had thrown away: this was to be restored to the favour of Sir Everard Fitz Arthur; and to the power of cheering Hylton's lonely moments by occasional visits. Her total exclusion from Arthur's Court, she considered as the due punishment of a grievous fault: but sensible of her own deep penitence, she felt entitled to the pardon awarded by mercy to contrition; and believing herself justified in striving to obtain it, racked her thoughts continually with plans for propitiating the resentment of the good Baronet, and yet preserving the secret of her heart's bitterest sorrow.

Common sense and natural delicacy told her she must wait for this anxious attempt until one event should make

her motives incapable of misconstruction; and she soon fancied it would not be long ere she discovered when that was likely to take place. Mrs. Clavering was coming to pass a day and night at St. Cuthberts, and Honoria was invited to meet her.

William Mulcaster rode to Edenfell, to say that his father had at length succeeded in making a blissful arrangement for him, upon which there was but one drawback. Mrs. Clavering had consented to a conditional engagement. Dora was to pay a month's visit to William's sisters, thereby enabling her and him, to study each other's every day tempers and habits; and if after that, her fair daughter saw no reason for changing her partial opinion of the gentleman, she was to return home — and he! — there came the terrible part of the arrangement! — he was to travel for one whole year, by way of trying his steadiness, — "or, I suppose," he said, "by way of giving us just as many heart-aches and false alarms, as my worthy father thinks will be the

proper stock of misery, for beginning a happy state with !"

In truth, the Dean would not hear of his son's marriage before he should turn the age of one and twenty; and as William had already got one year struck off from the two originally proposed, he was obliged to express present satisfaction, and to hear without envious murmurs, that Captain Barrington and Isabella were to be united as privately and as speedily as possible; lest their union should be put off to an indefinite period, by the gallant sailor's appointment to a new command.

When Mr. Mulcaster came to impart this intelligence, he came to say also, that the carriage would be sent for Miss O'Hara the next morning before breakfast, if she would come and be at St. Cuthberts, when Mrs. Clavering arrived to leave Dora there. He wished her to see Mrs. Clavering, he said, that she might report her opinion of that lady to Jane, besides a thousand other things which he could not spare time to write,

after "his angel," was under the same roof with him.

Honoria doubtfully referred him to Mrs. Meredith; and after sundry black looks threatening a storm on the petitioner's disappearance, consent was obtained. Every thing relating to those with whom Delaval Fitz Arthur might soon be bound up by the tenderest ties, was so interesting to Honoria, that she bore, without complaint, the acrimonious taunts of her aunt, who went on persisting, in the face of such facts as her niece's repeated refusal of invitations to scenes of pleasure, that Miss Honor thought of nothing now, since she had been at Ravenshaw, but visiting, and playing the fine lady.

To St. Cuthberts, however, Honoria went, with her uncle's full consent; for he solicitously sought to afford her opportunities for salutary distraction of thought, and for entering into the concerns of others with a pleasurable sympathy. She found every one there, animated by agreeable letters from Sophia

and Jane, and gaily talking over their approaching presentation to the queen. William, however, was like a restless ghost, not to be detained a moment in one place. He continued going about, evidently thinking only of one subject, and as if his own constant motion speeded the vehicle, which was bringing Mrs. Clavering and her daughter.

"Do bring up somewhere, William," cried Captain Barrington, in perfect good humour. "Can't you wait for your paragon riding at anchor, instead of standing off to sea, on a fool's cruize, — chasing nothing?"

"No fool's cruize with my prize in view, I can tell you!" returned William in his own language.

"I bet my first frigate," exclaimed Barrington; in a low voice to Honoria, who was sitting beside him on a garden seat, "that this Miss what's-her-name is not the twentieth part as pretty as my Isabella! — Talk of blue eyes, — where are there such as Isabella's?—true blue, — the colour of my jacket. — They are worth all the sky-blues under heaven!"

Captain Barrington, with all his clear-mindedness, had some powerful prejudices. These, though born and bred on shore, were fondly fostered at sea. They were three in number: first, he believed that such a mother as his own had never before existed; secondly, he was persuaded that nothing on earth was so beautiful as Isabella Mulcaster; thirdly, he considered Great Britain as the only country on the terraqueous globe, wherein true honour, pure patriotism, vital religion, and domestic happiness were to be found in perfection. In this faith, Captain Barrington lived, and in this faith he was prepared to die. Honoria soon learnt and respected his prejudices: at least, they honoured his heart.

While she was replying to him, the bound of William over some bushes, to get by a short cut to the house, announced that the sound she heard drawing near, was that of carriage-wheels. — A few minutes afterwards, she saw a group gathering in the morning-room, which opened out on the lawn, and Isa-

bella, (intercepted in her return to the garden-party,) advancing to welcome the new comers. As Miss Mulcaster was going through the ceremony of introduction to Mrs. Clavering, Captain Barrington jumped up, and familiarly drawing Honoria's arm through his, exclaimed, "Come, Miss O'Hara, let me take you in tow; crowd sail!" — Then, with as much boyish hilarity, as he would have done in his childish days, ran with her to the house.

They found there a group consisting of the Dean, his daughters, and William, the centre of which was the youthful Dora, standing beside her mother, answering with breathless delight the various welcoming questions addressed to her, and looking embarrassed from the mere consciousness of her own lively joy, at being again under the roof of St. Cuthberts. The occasion of her being there spoke in her bashful countenance, and quick throbbing bosom: even her apparent oblivion of William, might have told the tale. He stood at the extremity

of her " system," in too happy agitation himself, for instant expression of it.

Captain Barrington, as he took a rapid survey of the charming girl, whispered to his companion, " A sweet creature, indeed !" Then casting a glance of good-humoured mischief at William, " Your pretty dove has not flown into your arms, however !" — William had evidently been boasting his mistress's kindness, full as much as her prettiness, and he bit his lip.

Honoria's eye principally rested upon Mrs. Clavering : — the person of that lady was delicate, and her face expressive of that extreme tenderness of sensibility, which borders upon feebleness of character. Such a countenance made it probable, that in all relating to her children's establishments in marriage, she would rather be influenced by fond motives, than by ambitious considerations. Such a mother would deeply feel the value of such a son-in-law as Delaval Fitz Arthur ; and who could doubt, therefore, her taking all honest pains to

secure him for Miss Clavering. Honoria sighing with this conviction, yet met her courteous advance with maidenly self-command.

A hospitable table being one of the St. Cuthberts characteristics, refreshments, (such as were then common in the north,) were immediately brought for the travellers, and William had the felicity of doing all the honours of the chocolate and cake. — At first, Dora kept timidly close to her mother, as if afraid of giving too exclusive an attention to William's whispered, or rather attempted whispers of rapture and gratitude. At length the Dean took compassion upon his uncomfortable-looking son, and coming to his assistance drew Dora away from the maternal wing.

" Of course, young lady," he said somewhat equivocally, " you are come hither, — at least I humbly hope you are, — to claim your puppy. — Not at *my* hands," (seeing her blush,) " but at William's. It grows apace ; and I hear of little else than its wonderful capa-

cities. Come, William, go and fetch your little whelp."

William professed himself ready on the instant, "provided any one would go with him;" glancing at the same time towards Dora and Honoria. "Mr. Mulcaster must always be bribed to do any thing!" said his fair mistress, by way of most *creditable excuse*, for immediately preparing to obey the gentleman's wish, and stretching out her hand to Honoria.

"A notable character for a British senator, that is to be!" exclaimed Captain Barrington.

"Heard you that, Mr. Mulcaster?" asked Dora, as she and Honoria followed him out of the great glass door into the open air.

"Mr. Mulcaster!" repeated her lover, in a tone of pique.

"Why, you would not have me call you William, before people? — before your father, — Captain Barrington?" — Dora spoke with a little apprehensiveness.

"Yes, I would!" returned William,

still stung by the mortification of being disappointed, in a full display of her partiality before Captain Barrington. — "That formal Mr. !—Nobody can fancy you care one atom *particularly* for me."

"O! if it's only to gratify vanity, mighty sir," she cried gaily, yet with spirit, "depend upon it, I will *not* call you William."

"Then, madam, I shall take care to be equally respectful to you, — alone or in company." William was evidently desirous of giving Cupid all his dues; — and a quarrel being ever considered one of these, he would certainly have accomplished his meritorious purpose, had not the fair lady been gifted with more common sense or more softness than himself. Dora's eyes filled with instant tears, and she turned her head aside without speaking: but she went on, doing what he wished,—walking towards the kennel of Sylvia and her puppy.

For a few minutes, William continued silently walking by her side, with his eyes proudly looking straight forwards;

but soon vanquished by better feelings, he suddenly snatched her passive hand, and printing on it a kiss of passionate contrition, (regardless of witness,) exclaimed, "Forgive me dearest, sweetest Dora!—Use me as you please before company, only grant me some little indemnity when we are by ourselves, or with such a sincere friend as Miss O'Hara."

Dora's tearful smile answered him, for she was greatly agitated, and not very well able to speak. William still retaining the trembling hand he had taken, called pathetically upon Honoria to say a word in his favour, begging her to depone, that he was not often so cross and touchy as he owned himself just now: protesting that nothing ever vexed him, except the fancy that he was less kindly treated by persons he loved, than he thought they were wont to treat him."

"The truth is, Miss Clavering," said Honoria smiling, "Mr. Mulcaster, like Sir Anthony Absolute, is the best-tempered man breathing, if you will let him have his own way. But I warn you,

that his own way is generally in his opinion, 'wisest, discreetest, best;' and whoever happens to yoke themselves with him, must be contented to go it with him. I don't, however, think it is a bad way."

William clamoured against this cruel evidence; but, as Dora did not seem alarmed at it, they proceeded in restored harmony to the stables. There the playful puppy was seen and hugged, and allowed to worry off the little bows from Dora's black satin slippers; then, William's other favourites, some feathered, some furred, were recognised and welcomed. By the time their visit to this remote province was concluded, Dora's spirits had got up to their usual high pitch.

After returning to their friends in the house, William ventured in a low voice to suggest, that perhaps Mrs. Clavering and his father might like to have an hour to themselves; that it was a beauteous day, and that he had not had his ride yet; consequently that a riding

party would be particularly agreeable. Dora was always ready for humouring William, so she referred him to her mother for consent, provided somebody else would be of their party. William made sure of Henrietta and Honoria on the instant. As her daughter had only been travelling twenty miles in a close carriage over a good road, Mrs. Clavering would not object. She merely limited their ride to an hour in duration. Away flew Dora to summon her maid, and have her riding-dress unpacked. One of the Misses Mulcaster's habits had been good-naturedly suggested by Captain Barrington; but William, indignant at any figure pretending to the nymph-like form of his celestial Dora's, warmly voted for ransacking trunks and chaise-seats, and would far rather have given up the excursion altogether, than have discovered that Dora could wear one of Isabella's or Henrietta's habits.

"Well, well!" exclaimed Captain Barrington shrugging up his shoulders as he saw him hastening his fair companions;

" you have my leave to fly about, like a boy's kite, after your old fashion. — I only pity the woman who is to be fastened to you hereafter. I shall be off with Isabella, and her work-bag, and matchless Shakspeare. I was always fond of a snug birth, when I could get it."

" You seem to prefer wearing *your* diamond concealed ;" observed Honoria with a transient smile : " but Mr. Mulcaster must always have his upon his finger."

" Miss O'Hara, you are most particularly agreeable," said Captain Barrington, bowing and colouring to the implied compliment.

" Miss O'Hara, *vous parle comme un livre !*" mocked William. " So run, and put on your habit."

Soon, all equipped, and most gladsome, away cantered the small party; and after the first respectable quarter of an hour given to decorum, they might fairly be called two distinct parties : so entirely did the thoughtless lovers keep

the lead, and engross the talk. Honoria and her quiet companion by degrees ceased to think of them as belonging in the least to their ride, and getting into many a tender recollection of Jane, and into anxious anticipations for Isabella, completed their sober share of the excursion, with as much satisfaction as may be derived from air and exercise, partaken with a pleasing partner.

During the course of this day Mrs. Clavering was shown all the natural beauties of St. Cuthberts, and introduced to the acquaintance of Mrs. Charles Stanhope, first by due admiration of her engaging picture, and lastly by the perusal of her latest letters to her family.

Honoria's altered spirits had for some time thrown her into shade, upon occasions where formerly she would have dazzled and delighted. On the present, she was pale and anxiously absent; and though her habitual attentiveness to the amiable trifles of domestic intercourse, made it impossible for Mrs. Clavering not to feel an interest in her, the impres-

sion left by her manner and appearance, was different from that which William Mulcaster, and Delaval Fitz Arthur in earlier days, had described as the peculiar charm of both.

The moon is beautiful, whether "she walketh in her brightness," or struggles through gathering clouds. Honoria happy, and Honoria sad, was like her an object of admiration; though, in the latter case, always coupled with melancholy pleasure. So that when Mrs. Clavering afterwards described her as having pathetic eyes and a supplicating tone of voice, she intended to acknowledge her power of interesting, with as much sincerity as those who had painted Honoria's natural character of brilliant witchery.

One strong feeling had taught our heroine close observation and just inference. She saw, or fancied she saw, in Mrs. Clavering's look, an exhilaration which did not appear habitual there. The subdued expression of that lady's face, when in a state of rest, implied a

long course of chastised hopes, and this occasional smile of the heart, was attributable, therefore, to a new train of pleasurable certainties.

Mrs. Clavering spoke too of her eldest daughter with peculiar animation; dwelling on the happy return of her Agnes's health and cheerfulness, since she had become resident at Aycliffe, describing her benevolent and social occupations there, evidently demonstrating that most of her maternal fears were now relieved. Mrs. Clavering obviously thought, that Delaval Fitz Arthur's solid excellencies had already obliterated the impression made by a faulty lover; and doubtless she was far from even guessing, that his heart had a similar influence to shake off, ere he might with a clear conscience offer his hand to her charming daughter.

Having known Major O'Hara, though not very intimately, when in India, Mrs. Clavering brought its first lovely glow into Honoria's face, whilst speaking of his military reputation. Death's paleness displaced this bright glow, as the Dean

was heard telling Dora, that he had invited Sir Everard and Mr. Fitz Arthur to meet them at dinner that day.

Honoria stopt unconsciously in some answer she was making to Mrs. Clavering, and finding herself bewildered, pleaded sudden giddiness, and hurried into the outward air. Mrs. Clavering believing her affected by the mention of her father, regretted having named him, and Henrietta hastened out to seek and bring her back.

Honoria was relieved by finding the natural mistake made by Mrs. Clavering; and confessing an overcome feeling, said she would go to her room, and read herself into calmness, till it was time to dress for dinner. Henrietta agreed she was judging rightly; and unsuspicious of all that was passing within her, went with her to her room. Then, after duly dosing her with sal volatile, she left her alone.

Honoria's first impulse was to give way to agitation, until it should actually make her ill enough to afford a fair plea

to conscience, for her declining to appear at dinner. But a remnant of remaining pride suggested, that Miss Clavering's mother might possibly imagine some humiliating reason for her inability to appear where she was sure to see Delaval Fitz Arthur. Then came a better feeling: — the resolution to spare herself no humiliation, that was not morally degrading; and the honest hope of awakening some notion of her penitence in the mind of Sir Everard, by his observation of her saddened looks.

By the strongest effort of which a young heart is capable, our heroine was at length able to command her trembling nerves into stillness: and dressing herself (it must be owned with throbbing solicitude to look well,) she waited for the summons of the last dinner-bell.

While hesitating and lingering in the gallery, she encountered Dora Clavering issuing from her chamber, all robed in celestial blue, her very hair twined with flowers of that colour, because it was William's favourite. "Happy, happy

creature!" thought Honoria, as she looked on her beaming joyfulness, and quick beating heart.

"Dear Miss O'Hara!" exclaimed the kindly girl, putting her arm through hers, "you are still unwell I fear,—you look so pale!"

"I am not quite so well, I think, as I used to be!" returned Honoria, passing her hand hastily across her eyes: "but what quiet person can look well, beside such very happy faces as yours and Mr. Mulcaster's?"

Dora blushed and turned her head away; the answer had satisfied her.

William's hand met them at the entrance of the eating-room. Dinner was actually on table.

When Honoria was in the room, she knew not how she had got there, nor who had led her in, nor by whom she was seated at table. A hum of voices had sounded in her ear whilst entering, and she believed something had been said, of, or by, Sir Everard and Delaval Fitz Arthur: but what she had answered,

or how she had conducted herself, had not left a trace in her mind.

By slow degrees, she became sensible that Captain Barrington and the Dean were her supporters. Fitz Arthur sat between Mrs. Clavering and Miss Mulcaster, Sir Everard between the latter and Dora: thus placed, (as the first recognition was over,) our heroine could contrive to avoid addressing either of them; and both seemed ready enough to take advantage of her painful generalship. Sir Everard gave all his attention to Dora Clavering's artless sallies, without once directing even a common remark to his former favourite. Delaval Fitz Arthur appeared on the surface, in unusual spirits; for he talked much, and strove at seeming amused. There were however a paling colour on his cheek, and a fitful fire in his eye, which denoted a struggling heart.

Honoria did not once look towards him. His image, such as he had been at Dame Wilson's, was sufficiently powerful: it was ever before her. How

vividly did she remember his parting glance, his parting words! — They told of feelings smothered, not extinguished; feelings, which if Honoria might but rekindle them, (and a breath would do it,) life would again bloom out for her, in all the beauty of Paradise.

As she sat hearkening to the pleasing voice of Mrs. Clavering, she thought it assumed maternal gentleness whenever addressed to Fitz Arthur: and when dinner was ended, and the divided company were afterwards re-united in the drawing-room, as she saw Sir Everard go up to Mrs. Clavering and enter into earnest conversation awhile, she decided that so much anxiety for their children's union as appeared in the father of the one, and the mother of the other, must eventually effect what it wished.

Music being one of the habitual recreations at St. Cuthberts, she was soon summoned by the unconscious Captain Barrington, to sing him the beautiful air of "Auld lang syne; Fitz Arthur he knew could give them

the second:" they were, therefore, to sing together. To accompany Fitz Arthur seemed impossible to Honoria under the influence of her present feelings: she directly pleaded her invincible fright when singing before any one person with whom she was not intimate; repeatedly protested her total inability at that moment; and aided by Fitz Arthur's agitated entreaty that "they would not press Miss O'Hara, who, every body knew, never willingly, or causelessly disappointed any wish," she succeeded in getting away from the vocal party.

Something like joy was thrilling through her. Fitz Arthur had spoken in his kindest accent; and what he had said, had evidently been meant for her own peculiar application. "Generous Fitz Arthur!" she thought, "this is to reconcile me to myself, to prove he does not condemn me. — Oh, how much more do I now hate myself!"

Whilst Dora Clavering was good-naturedly calling off Captain Barrington's attention from what had passed, by some

brilliant variations of *Rule Britannia*, Honoria glided down the room to the Dean, who was standing looking towards the remoter group with fulness of satisfaction. He was so completely absorbed by his own contemplations, that he went on softly repeating to himself some lines from that beautiful hymn, which must be familiar to every elegant and Christian reader, — a hymn which every heart ought to find an echo for : —

> " Ten thousand, thousand precious gifts
> My daily thanks employ ;
> Nor is the least, a cheerful heart,
> That tastes those gifts with joy !"

" Long, and ever may it be so, dear sir !" Honoria could not forbear exclaiming, though softly, as she stopped by him.

" Amen !" responded the Dean, turning round to her. " But as we are taught to rejoice with trembling ; I am half inclined to think there is too much happiness in this house just now, for lasting : more than may be good for any of us. Life has so many changes !

the Almighty has so many striking ways of *sifting* and *eventually* blessing his creatures: earthly disappointment is one of these ways."

"Yet if we are permitted a cheerful trust in a gracious Providence," said Honoria, hesitating from real humility, "I should venture to say disappointment is not likely here. Captain Barrington's worth and affection so thoroughly tried; Mr. Mulcaster's and Miss Clavering's partiality so obviously favoured by yourself and her mother;—dear sir, why may not each of them, reasonably expect as great a portion of Heaven's blessing as dearest Jane possesses!"

"If we discuss the doctrine of merits," returned the Dean smiling, "I suspect from what you say, that you and I shall differ; or that your notions, my dear young lady, are yet undefined on that important subject: so we'll put it by till a fitter time. At present I may say, that without any particular difference of Christian practice between two individuals, an all-wise Disposer may see fit

to adapt the trial of prosperity or adversity, of joy or sorrow, to different characters. Do you not feel that whatever may give us joy, may also cause us affliction? I, therefore, when standing thus looking at my happy children present, with my absent Jane and her Charles in perspective, look beyond the bright and pleasing scene now existing. I suppose Isabella and Barrington married; — he ordered to sea, — an engagement ——" The Dean's countenance finished the sentence.

Honoria respectfully stole his hand into hers, and pressing it with timid affection: — "Even supposing such fatal events, does not calamity, from the immediate will of God, ever come accompanied by the grace that enables us to bear it? — It is only when we have been the cause of our own bitter sorrow, our own ruin, by our folly, our wickedness, that we find the anguish of deprivation too great for us to support."

"She speaks as if she knew such sorrow!" audibly exclaimed the Dean to Delaval Fitz Arthur, who had by some

means got into their vicinity. The Dean spoke without suspicion of the fact that he had stumbled upon; and could he have seen both their faces at the same instant, the truth might have flashed upon him: but his eyes merely took in the suddenly red, and as suddenly pale face of the person he addressed; and while he was speculating upon that, Honoria hastily vanished amongst those at the other end of the room.

When the Dean and Fitz Arthur followed in the same direction shortly afterwards, the latter took a chair near Miss Clavering, and the former at the sweet call of Dora, drew to her for a sonata of Handel's. William in the full exercise of his power over Dora's vanquished affections (and we will do him the justice to say, enjoying it, as good kings do theirs, from the consciousness of willing the happiness of her he ruled,) hovered about her chair, with all those nameless, engrossing attentions, which so surely appropriates the person for whom they are performed; exchanging

now a smile, and now a sigh, now a glance as she touched a tender chord, or gave some favourite passage of triumphant expression with joyous brilliancy. Perhaps a certain prettily fancied ring of pearl and turquoise, glittering for the first time on one of her small fingers, had much to do with smile, sigh, and glance.

Captain Barrington was by this time a perfect convert, both to the lady's *charming* powers, and to those of her lover. William therefore was content.

Honoria had no longer sympathy to bestow upon these amiable lovers; yet her heart was naturally disposed to rejoice with all that rejoiced. She stood close to the instrument on which Dora played, in statue-like fixture; thinking with bitter humiliation of the unguarded expression she had lately uttered, which must have been heard by Delaval Fitz Arthur; and at which, if it were possible for him to imagine she had meant it for his ear and interpretation, she ought for ever to hide her head. Having got

blocked up where she stood, by Dora's other listeners, (who were all too attentive to the music for other sounds to catch their ear,) Honoria could not escape from hearing some passages of Mrs. Clavering's conversation with her next companion. The first sentence she caught was the following: —

"No, indeed! — You have all described her quite wrong: — those large melancholy eyes, — they have a sort of beseeching look, that absolutely goes to my heart."

"Melancholy eyes!" repeated Fitz Arthur, with impetuous surprise! "You might as well call the sun's light melancholy."

Something at her own heart, and in Fitz Arthur's tone, made Honoria conscious they spoke of her, and she trembled so at the moment, that she could not extricate herself from the press round her before she heard Mrs. Clavering's reply: "Then there must now, be a worm within, my dear Delaval." Something else she added, but as she said it

into his ear, Honoria was left to torture herself by imagining its import. At that whisper and the familiar epithet preceding it, her heart seemed dying away; both these trifles were construed by her into proofs that all she feared was true; and as she forcibly broke through the barrier formed by her other friends, she met the deeply fixed look of Fitz Arthur.

Even the distracted vision of determined despair could not mistake that look. Yes, Fitz Arthur loved her still! although his father's wishes, their own necessities perhaps, a belief of her indifference, and Miss Clavering's long-known merits were leading him from principle and inclination towards the latter. Her extreme emotion was at once covered and interrupted by the servant throwing open the door, and announcing Colonel Mason.

"Enter Colonel Mason with a flourish of teeth!" exclaimed William, advancing to welcome this unexpected visitor. But the Colonel did not enter with his usual wide smile, he came in staid and stately,

as though he had belted up his manner with his body. William's unmerciful raillery, Captain Barrington's warm greeting, (for the Colonel was already a favourite with him,) and the bright eyes of the ladies, soon forced the gallant officer into the reality or semblance of his ordinary self; yet Honoria, who had been powerfully struck by his air on entering, detected him looking every now and then with troubled scrutiny at each individual of the party, and a vague fear came over her.

Martial music was immediately bestowed upon the son of Mars; and the fair musician in reply to his mock reproach, that she had never condescended to any flirtation with him, sang alone, with a mixture of pathos and pleasantry, the dialogue duet of "O say, bonnie lass, will ye go a campaigning."

The air or the words were not exactly what Colonel Mason would have selected at that moment for his own especial pleasure; and certain uneasy movements of his hands and feet, testified that the

song did not give him particular satisfaction. But Dora sang on, till resigning her seat at the instrument to Miss Mulcaster, she drew towards her mother, and the Colonel then went his round of good-natured gossip through the small circle.

His first business was to account for his intrusion amongst them. He was taking his solitary ride after mess, he said, when hearing the sounds of the piano, wafted across the lawn actually into the bridle-road, where he was soberly pacing on old Marlborough, he could not resist the temptation of joining so pleasant a party. Colonel Mason then asked very particularly after his fair favourite, Mrs. Charles Stanhope, was politely attentive to the reported date of her last letter, and gratified by finding that only one short week had passed since its arrival.

Still, however, the poor Colonel was so obviously out of spirits, that William audibly decided an order must just have come for the regiment to change its

quarters, and that its commander had some personal reason for being loth to obey. While he was settling this point with those nearest him, Honoria stepped out into the open air: the night was one of softest summer, the glass doors of the ground parlour stood open, and glad to escape from some within, she wandered away by herself. William sent a shout of triumphant laughter after the luckless Colonel Mason, when he saw him nimbly vanish in the same direction.

Enraptured with his own absurd notion the light-hearted youth insisted upon no one's attempting to follow the lovelorn officer; saying, he felt confident that the poor gentleman was going to put the awful question under favour of sentimental moonlight. William's ridiculous jesting detained, by infecting some of his auditors with his mirth, and others were kept within by emotions of a stronger nature. Thus, they certainly left Colonel Mason ample time for a most explicit avowal.

Far different, in truth, was the worthy

officer's conversation with Honoria. He accosted her with kindly anxiety; stating, that he had just heard from a military correspondent at the Horse Guards, that the regiment to which Major Stanhope belonged was ordered for immediate service in India, to supply the place of one which had literally been cut to pieces in a late formidable battle there. He, the Colonel, had come to St. Cuthberts, he confessed, to discover if Major Stanhope had effected his proposed exchange; for if not, he knew too well the jealous honour of a soldier, not to be sure that Major Stanhope would go with his regiment. The speaker added, that he applied to Miss O'Hara for the information he would not startle the family by asking for, since they had not volunteered any upon this subject; quite certain he need not pray her to keep the knowledge of the disagreeable circumstance solely to herself, until official communications should either remove or confirm it.

At this intelligence, every thought of

self vanished from Honoria's breast; she was all engrossed with Jane's approaching trial: for she knew that Major Stanhope was annoyed and kept in suspense by the dilatoriness of the person with whom he was to exchange. The Dean's discourse with her now seemed to have been prophetic; his natural apprehensions a sort of warning preparation. Whether Jane were to go with her husband to that distant, dangerous land, or to be left behind; either way was sorrow and separation: and when to the grief of absence were added the chances of war, Honoria knew the contemplation of such separation would nearly bereave her poor friend of reason. Yet how was she to make up her mind to leaving on such short notice, father, brother, sisters, for the husband who might fall in the very first engagement!

Such a wide picture of family distress and difficulty at once rose before her view, that it was some moments ere she could recover sufficiently from the shock to speak. She then besought Colonel Ma-

son to preserve his considerate silence, and to rely upon her sending him the earliest intelligence, if comforting news arrived by the next day's post. She added a request, that he would leave her and return to the house, as his absence might excite some surmises of the truth; and if left alone she would be able to recover herself sooner, and appear as though nothing had happened.

When left as she had begged, Honoria continued traversing the path which the peaceful moon chequered with a light of such holy stillness, that it seemed to penetrate into her heart. The violent pang with which she had first heard Colonel Mason's fear expressed, gave way under higher influence. With her eyes upturned to the heaven whence these better feelings were derived, she prayed that the threatened storm-cloud might not burst over heads so dear and honoured as those in St. Cuthberts; that so bitter a cup as separation from her country and her kindred, might pass from the hand of her absent friend. And

as the recollection of Jane's generous disposition and fervent piety came powerfully over her mind, she ventured to believe that such recollections were testimonies of her character being one for which the discipline of grievous suffering is not necessary.

Soothed by such thoughts, Honoria was not very long a truant from the company. She found Sir Everard and his son were gone, leaving their "good nights" for her. Colonel Mason was on the wing, and every one, except William and Dora, seemed well-inclined for their chambers. They now allured others out to admire the moonlight, and as the Dean had got to chess with Captain Barrington, Honoria had full excuse for taking up a book and reading until the prayer-bell summoned together masters and servants, and sent them all to rest with soberized minds and hearts.

The next morning she loitered at the breakfast-table, though a new purchase of her uncle's, a plain whiskey, was waiting to convey her home. She hoped

that a letter from Mrs. Charles Stanhope would arrive and dissipate her secret uneasiness: but the postman came, and no letter from Culverden.

William, who had pampered himself with the expectation of an answer to some raptures he had written his sister about Miss Dora Clavering's purposed visit, insisted upon taking leave to abuse Jane without mercy. Vowing half in jest, half in earnest, that he believed she was turning an absolute changeling; that the next letter she would condescend to send them, would probably be either one sheet or a score of mere note paper, such as all *fine ladies* now thought *fine* to cheat their dearest friends with, showing, that however whim might induce them to scrawl over twenty such baby sheets, their original purpose was only to oblige their friend or relation with a solitary one; he *dare say'd* that his honourable sister (with a great stress upon honourable,) was thinking of nothing beyond gold lama, and lace lappets, and the queen, and how the account of

her dress would read in the Morning Post.

The Dean fairly willing to let all his son's traits of character develope themselves before the inexperienced young creature, who looked only for a halcyon existence when his wife, cast a significant yet extenuating glance towards Mrs. Clavering, suffering William to go on.

William's irritation was subsiding, and a kindlier feeling of disappointment becoming apparent in his moistened eyes and hurried voice. This testified something in his favour; it went to prove, that a quick sensibility, rather than a querulous temper, was the source of his transient anger. The only effect, therefore, which this display of his fault had upon Dora, was that of making her silently promise herself never willingly to pain such an affectionate heart, after the owner of it should have given her the power of pleasing or plaguing him at will.

Mrs. Clavering's indulgence did not go such vast lengths: yet on the whole

she did not dislike this sample of William's faults; aware as she was, that even the best of created beings have many imperfections, she rejoiced to find in persons she loved, or desired to love, only such infirmities as reason may control, and religion may finally be expected to master.

Honoria felt much while listening to them. She scarcely knew whether the affectionate irritation of William, the Dean's cheerful resignation to small disappointments, or Miss Mulcaster's natural way of accounting for the present one, by some loss of a post, were the most painful thing to hear, each and all were so little suited to the real circumstances.

After receiving William's promise, that he would ride over the next day and tell her all the news from Culverden or town, (reckoning surely then upon the arrival of a letter,) she made a quick retreat, and as Mrs. Clavering was going also, her agitated manner passed unobserved.

CHAP. VIII.

THE following day certainly brought Mr. Mulcaster to the Rectory: he came in great distress. Jane had written, and Colonel Mason's correspondent had been rightly informed, the —— light dragoons were ordered to hold themselves in readiness to embark for India with some other regiments, demanded urgently by the latest despatches thence; and as the officer who was to have exchanged with Major Stanhope had just previously decided that he would *not* exchange, Stanhope had no alternative except losing his honour, or taking the chances of foreign service. Even Lord Culverden, though sorely struck, did not urge him to resign his commission. Jane was resolute to go with her husband, dearly as she loved all in her first

dear home : and while she firmly though sorrowfully declared this, in her letter to her father, she assured him, that Lord Culverden's interest would soon procure his son some staff appointment, which would recall them to their country, after this temporary sacrifice to military honour ; and they should then, with God's blessing, be doubly happy again.

William's actual anguish, while repeating these details, was only meliorated by tender admiration of Dora Clavering, who had proved herself in this conjuncture, in his opinion, little less than an angel of consolation. He protested that when the blow fell on them, they must all have sunk, even his father, so wholly did it take them by surprize, had it not been for Dora. She had suggested a variety of possible circumstances, any one of which might prevent the regiment from going ; and of which, she as a military man's daughter professed a knowledge to which not one of them could lay claim. She had conjured up a number of ingenious arguments in

support of every suggested hope; and had further proposed that William should immediately go away, and remain in London with Lord Culverden's family, until the order were either countermanded or acted upon by Stanhope's regiment. William, she said, would give them the relief of hearing by every post, when Mrs. Stanhope might be too distressed, and her husband too much occupied for writing letters.

Yet Dora had not spoken comfort from a heart slightly affected by the domestic grief she witnessed. William protested he should never forget her lovely manner! He still saw her, he said, stealing down upon one knee beside his father, kissing the shaking hand that grasped Jane's letter, and rested on the arm of his great chair; and though the tears were streaming down her own sweet cheeks, gently scolding him for not helping her to assure the Dean that there were many just grounds for hope. Then she had been so kind and tender to William himself afterwards, when they

parted! She had voluntarily recurred to their conditional engagement, and had offered to give up going to a single public amusement during the whole twelve months he was to travel on the Continent, promising to think herself as truly his wife as though they were already married.

In short, though Mr. Mulcaster had accepted only the last binding offer, and was indeed most unhappy from the apprehension of losing his sister, Dora's affection *had* comforted him; for it showed him where he would find an equivalent for such a loss. He was powerfully impressed also by her indulgent temper. He had been expressing detestation of himself for what he had said of Jane the day before at breakfast, and instead of reading him a lecture upon his impatient character, Dora had excused it even to himself: therefore, he felt convinced, that after they were married, (if such felicity were indeed ordained for him,) her generous love would pique him into actual perfection.

Whilst William continued pouring out his best feelings and purposes in the language of youth, yet unconscious that it must at last learn to have a higher motive for our well-doing, than that of gaining a mortal's approbation, Honoria's more ripened heart silently acknowledged the gracious hand of Providence in the threatened affliction of the St. Cuthbert family. This affliction might have its appointed commission staid here, it might terminate in merely deepening and sanctifying an attachment as yet, perhaps, not sufficiently connected in the youthful lovers' thoughts with serious views and fixed duties. Her tearful acknowledgment of previous acquaintance with the event they bewailed, accounted at once to William for a strangeness in Miss O'Hara, which they had all observed on the day she spent with them. No suspicion, therefore, of her earlier emotion from the presence of Fitz Arthur and his father could exist.

The Edenfell chaise, in which Mr. Mulcaster was to post to London, had

been ordered to come and take him up at the Rectory, and on its first jingle he hurried away. Mr. Meredith intercepted him as they met in the fore court, where he learned his anxious errand, and promising to ride over that very day to visit the troubled Dean, he gave him a parting benediction.

Mr. Meredith only brought back from his charitable visit the account that he had found the Dean exerting himself to meet the final termination of his present faint hope with Christian submission. Miss Mulcaster was drowned in tears; for she, too, was about to unite her fate with a man, upon whom his country had a claim. Henrietta, though sorely stricken, was uncomplaining. Captain Barrington was so worthily subdued by the family distress, that he seemed ready to defer his own wishes without a murmur, rather than by pressing for the fulfilment of Isabella's engagement to him, give a new trial to her suffering father. Only Dora Clavering spoke unremittingly of hope, but hers was the age of believing

in every day miracles; and she still insisted upon the fact, that few things are so uncertain as meditated military changes.

To this ground of hope Mr. Meredith trusted their alarmed friends would cling, and when he assured Honoria he thought it a fair one, he added that he had called on his way back at Arthur's Court. There he had excited sincere sympathy for the St. Cuthbert family, and there he had learned that Delaval Fitz Arthur was going immediately to Ireland, upon business connected with Mrs. Branspeth's will, of a very important nature, and as the gentleman with whom he was to transact it was in the north of that island, he proposed going from the little port of Whitehaven direct to Belfast. Whitehaven was only in the next county, and the passage to Belfast was often made in less than three days. His stay would not be very long in Ireland, so that he trusted he might be back in three or four weeks at furthest. As his destination was the north of Ire-

land, he had desired Mr. Meredith to say, that if Miss O'Hara had any commission which he could execute, it would give him pleasure to be so employed.

"But of course you will have none," concluded her uncle, with slight emphasis. — "None, of course, dear sir," was the agitated reply, and then their conversation ended.

The departure of Delaval Fitz Arthur for another country, solely on business of Miss Clavering's, did not appear sufficiently explained by the fact of his executorship, to the gossips of Northumberland, for them to pass it over unquestioned: they decided, that nothing less than a sure future right to share all the advantages of his embassy with the lady for whom he went, could be the inducement.

From speculating upon the union of the Fitz Arthur estates, and their many mortgages, with the unencumbered one of Aycliffe, these chatterers proceeded to canvass the marriages in prospect at St. Cuthberts. Mrs. Shafto found some-

thing to lament in every one of them. — Such a deplorable disparity between Miss Mulcaster and Captain Barrington! — Several years she believed: but she *would not* know how many. She only hoped it might turn out differently from every other match of the kind. Miss Henrietta's love affair was, alas, an *old* story: how the Dean, a *good* man, a *sensible* man, could have given his sanction to such an engagement! Mr. Wallington had nothing but his high character to push him forward, neither money nor interest; he might remain a curate all his life, — and they were not to marry till he got a living, however small. Poor Miss Henrietta was like enough to remain at St. Cuthberts, till even her saint could no longer think her an angel. — Then the business of Mr. Mulcaster and Miss Dora Clavering; it was a perfect scandal; two absolute children! It was difficult to say whether the excellent Dean or Mrs. Clavering (who, by the way, was said to be a very weak woman,) showed the greatest folly in the affair. Really the Dean ought to be-

come more cautious for his children: for how sadly Mrs. Charles Stanhope's boasted match had turned out! Assuredly there either must be a deficiency of money in that quarter, or else Lord Culverden had some reason for displeasure at his son; otherwise he might, by speaking a word to those at the head of the war office, get Major Stanhope excused from going to India. — Indeed a thousand pounds or so would do the thing at once, so many wanted an exchange!

Remarks thus originating in envy, and embittered by ill-nature, circulated through the upper set of Mrs. Shafto, and the under set of her faithful though unconscious coadjutor, Mrs. Meredith. Mrs. Shafto had now learned Mrs. Meredith's character so completely, that without *committing* herself (as it is called,) she could at any time teach her a lesson, and send her to repeat it to the wife of the medical man, or to the lawyer, and they were sure to spread it (though innocent of unamiable purposes,) through a wider circle.

In this way Honoria heard animadversions like those just cited, and heard them with sickening suspicion of the malignant breath whence they first issued. They made her suffer far more than she had ever done, from the inflictions of her aunt's ill-humours. Whilst her heart swelled under such malicious representations of persons she either loved or honoured, she sometimes feared that her own temper was becoming irritable. Temper, however, if originally sweet by nature, and given to principle for preservation, is the last of our qualities which falls before calamity: its total overthrow is, therefore, one of the most mournful objects to contemplate; it is seeing the axe laid to the root of all that might otherwise bring happiness to the sufferers in after life: as such we lament it even more for themselves than for the sake of others. Honoria had much to suffer ere any great alteration could take place in her actively good disposition; and she had the agreeable prospect of being soon left to herself at the Rectory.

Mrs. Meredith had been covertly stimulated by Mrs. Shafto first to wish for, and then to propose making a visit to Mr. Meredith of Thoresby. Miss Matilda's round of Yorkshire visitations drew to a close. Mr. Meredith had already been facetiously joked about her obvious inclination to possess herself of himself and his hall; yet were she to come away without receiving a proposal from him, it did not seem probable that one would be sent after her. The shrewd mother decided upon sending Mrs. Meredith as an unconscious auxiliary. To Thoresby, therefore, inflated with sudden notions of her own consequence, and duly primed with insinuated flatteries to her husband's cousin, did Mrs. Meredith resolve to go; Mr. Meredith acknowledging she rarely "took her pleasure," reluctantly wrote to offer himself and her, on a fortnight's visit, provided his good cousin had no other company staying in the house, and that Mr. Meredith could get his church and parochial duties properly supplied during his absence from Edenfell. A

cordial and welcoming answer had been returned by the careless squire, and preparations were accordingly commenced.

Meanwhile Honoria saw some of her friends from St. Cuthberts, or heard from them every day with a little chronicle of their hopes, fears, and agitations. Nothing was yet decided finally: — some expectation of another descent upon Ireland by the French, made the commander-in-chief unwilling to send more troops abroad than were absolutely necessary, especially during a period like the one then present, in which revolutionary principles were so studiously circulated amongst the discontented of both the sister kingdoms. The embarkation of the regiments destined for India was therefore delayed, until letters by a ship hourly expected should either urge their departure or afford some lucky reason for retaining them at home. Various contradictory rumours were said to be afloat amongst military speculatists, some raising expectations, others crushing them. Many

minor circumstances, creating useless alarm, or vain hope, had occurred to each person interested in the result: indeed those who have known a great anxiety in life, know how much of needless suffering seems ever bound up with that which is the main body of all; and how often their distempered minds were inclined to think such additional grievances were only crowded into their particular destiny.

William Mulcaster, whilst absent, wrote folios. Every one of his letters was duly superscribed to Miss Mulcaster, or Miss Henrietta Mulcaster, but the contents of each were decidedly the property of Dora Clavering. There was small agreement either in quality or quantity between these diffuse effusions, and certain single sheets of Bath paper, with five lines of gigantic size in a pigmy page, carefully hoarded by his fond sisters through different periods of separation. The Misses Mulcaster could do no less, therefore, than gratify Dora with a frequent perusal of these letters; by

which means the young lady was soon qualified to repeat them nearly verbatim to herself, when thinking of William on her sleepless pillow.

No set of persons showed themselves more solicitous to bring comforting opinions, than Colonel Mason and his officers: one came with confident prophecy of the —— regiment's detention in England, from some demi-official authority in London; another ventured to speak largely in favour of the climate and habits of India. In short, every kindly heart partook of the sudden dismay of a family lately so happy, and so deservedly respected by poor and rich.

At St. Cuthberts itself, the humbler faces were the most dismal, for they belonged to a class less accustomed to chasten their natural feelings by the exercise of a governing principle. The old housekeeper's grief knew no bounds already; and that, she declared, because she had so often allowed herself to be driven quite mad at Miss Jane, for carrying off her hoards of preserves and

cordials, whenever she chose to give them away: now, she declared, if Miss Jane would only stay in England, she should have her leave to give the very gown off her back. If once she put foot on the sea, she, Mrs. Wood, was sure she would go to the bottom, and then what a heart-break for the Dean.

At length the torturing suspense ended: Dora Clavering's predictions were verified. The expected vessel from India brought the news of a short peace there, between the East India company and the native prince, with whom they had been warring; half the troops under orders for embarkation were countermanded; the —— regiment was one of these; and Major Stanhope might now recommence his endeavours to get exchanged into the household troops.

William Mulcaster delayed not a moment, after receiving this blessed intelligence: leaving his sister to weep out her joy on the answering breast of her husband, (his own heart having plentifully unburthened itself,) he threw him-

self into a chaise, and was at home six hours sooner than the post could have brought a letter.

Love is not all it should be, until it has been bathed in tears. William and Dora met again with new sentiments of admiration for, and approbation of, each other; they felt too, a sweeter security in each other's affection; so that the youthful instinct, of wishing to love and be beloved, seemed now exalted into exclusive, heart-honouring preference. When the young man embraced his sisters, he looked the fonder clasp he longed to give, yet durst not give to her, dearer than a sister; as his eye clung to her, he felt conscious that his would be a useless pilgrimage of trial; he would return from it, just as he went, all Dora's.

The trembling of Dora's little hand, as she suffered him to seize it, her half-uttered, half-checked welcome, were to William worth all the embraces of all the sisters in the world: his cup just then was full.

All at St. Cuthberts was now sun-

shine: joyful faces and grateful hearts. The Dean's heart the most grateful; his face, perhaps, the least joyful: for he looked towards Isabella, and knew that many an hour of fearful separation must come to her, blest as her lot might be otherwise. Yet he was willing to trust in the One great Hand for her future stay; and knew well that no father might presumptuously seek to shelter his child from the trials appointed for all mankind. William could not tear himself from the charm at his home; therefore sent a short letter from Jane to Miss O'Hara, accompanied by a few lines from himself, to say he would ride to Edenfell the next day, and bring one of his sisters, and perhaps Miss Dora Clavering, to talk over what had just passed.

Honoria shed the first joyous tears her eyes had known for many weeks, over Mrs. Charles Stanhope's letter. Her strong emotion flowed openly forth, in expressions of animated sympathy, with the thankfulness of her friends at St. Cuthberts. Mr. Meredith cordially joined

her in such thanksgivings; while his louring wife muttered, she hoped now, that *people* would not go *glumping* about the house, as if there was a dead body in it! Such a *fuss* indeed! as if nobody had ever married an officer before, and gone to *Ingy!*

The next day, at something of a late hour, the promised equestrian party appeared. They owned to having been first to Monksden, to tell the good news there; and afterwards seeing "signs of inhabitation" at Hazeldean, had called in there also, and actually found Mrs. Preston and her eldest daughter just returned. Miss Dulcy for some wise reason was left behind them for the autumn. There were other news besides to tell; and these were, that Captain Barrington and Isabella were to be married without further loss of time. That day week was fixed for their wedding. It was to be perfectly private. Isabella would not ask even Miss O'Hara to be present, lest other friends might take offence: but Dora Clavering, being in the house, would

naturally come in for the trouble of playing second bridemaid, along with Henrietta.

William seemed enchanted with this agreement of their family stars, as he chose to term these mere accidents. But he was not quite in a sane state at that moment: for they had encountered a party of gipsys during their ride; and as every one of these wandering hordes claimed young Mr. Mulcaster for a patron and protector, he was soon induced to persuade the persuadable Dora, to give one of them her "roseate palm."

It required much less shrewdness than belongs to these amusing vagrants, to enable this black-eyed sibyl to make a good guess at what her consulters wished might be in store for them: — she had only to look at their eyes instead of their hands. Her predictions were moulded accordingly; and such a number of embarrassed denials and confessing blushes had been added by Dora to the detail of past occurrences and the prophecy of future events, that William, (who just

now beheld only one event in the world for him,) gave himself up to the determined intoxication of credulity. He was come to the Rectory in the wildest excess of animal spirits, heightened by mental rapture.

To these boisterous spirits, poor Miss Preston fell a sacrifice. William was full of her rushing out upon them, with her *chevaux en papillon*, as she called having her *hair in papers;* apologising for such disarray, by owning the limited scale of her mother's *manège*, which forced the poor servants to turn horses; adding, that she herself was just helping the maids to rip up an old *matelot*, under the *canapé* of the trees.

For the verity of all this impossible nonsense, William appealed to Dora and his sister, who were obliged to allow that much of it had really been uttered by the absurd Bella. Honoria upbraided him for his treachery, in bringing such details after having received so animated a welcome: then proceeded to learn that Mrs. Preston had sent a message by

him, to tell her friends at the Rectory, that she had returned only the preceding evening, and hoped to see them very soon at Hazeldean.

Honoria's heart beat with pleasure at this message; for though restricted from unburthening herself to this maternal friend, she yet looked for many an hour of soothing sweet enjoyment in her endearing society, trusting to regain there, by degrees, the power of deriving permanent satisfaction from interests unconnected with Delaval Fitz Arthur.

A gorgeous fan from Mrs. Charles Stanhope being presented to Mrs. Meredith by way of propitiatory offering, and greedily accepted, he was graciously permitted to roam at will over all the precincts of the Rectory, including waste, wilderness, and Honoria's garden. Dora Clavering already followed him like one of his pets: but she was the fondled lamb which the shepherd would willingly carry ever in his arms, shelter with his own undefended body, and protect at the peril of his life. Such a shepherd

it is no shame for helpless woman to follow.

Our heroine's feeling of bitter contrast in her fate to their blameless happiness, softened as she regarded them. It is so sweet to witness happiness; and theirs seemed so perfect at that moment! For although one black cloud had just hung over it, teaching them that such clouds are frequent in life's brightest sky; still as they thought not of coming storm or shadow, their enjoyment of the present was unalloyed.

As Mr. and Mrs. Meredith were to set out for Thoresby the next day, their niece engaged to visit St. Cuthberts ere Isabella should become Mrs. Barrington; andwith this promise the trio prepared to depart; congratulating her and themselves afresh upon the joy of detaining Jane and Stanhope in England.

Whilst they were descending the slope of the hill, William drew Honoria away from the others, asking her, with particular earnestness, if she did not agree with him in thinking that Dora never looked

lovelier than she was now doing. An unhesitating affirmative being obtained, he then owned that he was anxious to show Dora in her fullest beauty to *the Most Noble Marchioness of Brinkbourn*, who was coming down to Hexham with her *graceful consort* the next week, he believed; when he should make his father give them a grand dinner in honour of Isabella's nuptials, (she and Barrington being gone,) and should enjoy the vexation of the said noble lady, at sight of such loveliness in the charming creature to whom he was devoted. He was not a little anxious also to show Lady Brinkbourn, by his different manner with Dora, that he had never been in love before. "He really thought he could go and *toady* Mrs. Shafto, if that might gain him the large loan of their organ, for Dora's exquisite talents to be exhibited as well as her beauty.

Upon this theme William's voluble tongue was now off, past the power of stopping: and perhaps he prolonged his private conference, because he observed

its artless subject looking back at him and his charming companion; and flattered himself with receiving afterwards, the very *desirable* tribute of a little jealousy in consequence of this seeming assiduity to another. In truth he was by no means inclined to abate a single one of his many dues from the blind god, whether it were of weal or of woe.

Having regained the house, cordial adieus were exchanged, and charged with gratulatory messages to the Captain and Isabella, the equestrians departed.

Mr. Meredith soon after returning from a confirmation at a neighbouring town, and being told of Mrs. Preston's arrival at Hazeldean, offered to walk thither with his niece for an hour's chat, leaving the preparations for the morrow to be finished at their return.

Mrs. Meredith, luckily, was at that moment engaged in hot dispute with an itinerant grinder of scissors at the gate of the fore court, so that her husband and his niece made good their escape by the back-door, ere she had knowledge

of their purpose, and could intercept them.

At Hazeldean there was so much to talk animatedly about of the St. Cuthberts family, and so much to hear from Miss Bella of the fashions, ceremonies, and great personages at Harrowgate this season, that no topic was enlarged upon which threatened destruction to Honoria's glowing feelings. Her uncle's presence assisted her in warding off any more particular mention of Delaval Fitz Arthur than what belonged to him in common with his father and brothers. Mrs. Preston was so single-minded that she ever took things as they appeared on the surface; and saw nothing extraordinary, therefore, in the executor to a will, going over to Ireland in the performance of his duty. She merely regretted that they were losing him for so long a period.

Her cheerful strain of thought, her kindly voice, her brightly moistened eyes whilst commenting upon the trial which had threatened all Mrs. Charles

Stanhope's friends, and yet more, her artless display of affection as she sat holding her "dear Honor's" hand between both hers, acted upon the secret mourner's heart with healing power.

"What ingratitude in me!" she thought, "to continue brooding over one affliction, when I have so many reasons to be thankful! What self-willedness to refuse pleasure from the certainty of being thus loved by the excellent Mrs. Preston, and my kind uncle, solely because I am justly banished from the affection of Sir Everard Fitz Arthur! What rebellion against deserved chastisement!" Her spirits recovered their elasticity with these thoughts; and at once actuated by grateful sentiments towards every friend she possessed, whether absent or present, and a deeper sense of what she owed to her Heavenly Benefactor, she ceased to attract her uncle's frequent look of anxious reminder. She became unaffectedly interested in all that her dear Mrs. Preston made her relate of Jane Mulcaster's marriage and the mi-

nor scenes afterwards; nay, even listened with smiling attention to Miss Bella's elaborate description of a Harrowgate fine lady.

Being warned by former experience of Mrs. Meredith's wrathful impatience, the Rector and his niece forbore to indulge in staying tea. Honoria knew she would find a second home at Hazeldean during her loneliness, and desirous of parting amicably with her aunt, she hastened to follow her uncle's example, by taking leave and returning to assist in packing and bearing rebukes.

The next day, in a hack chaise, hung round with Mrs. Meredith's bandboxes, and crowded with Mr. Meredith's books, (the opposite objects of each others secret aversion,) away went the ill-matched pair for Yorkshire.

Honoria saw them depart with particular satisfaction, because she had just heard from Hetty that an infectious fever was in a hamlet at some little distance, whither their maid of all-work had been late the preceding night to see a

sick brother; and having been with him two days before, was too likely to have taken the infection. Certain symptoms in the girl that very morning appeared to confirm such apprehensions.

Honoria knew that if Mrs. Meredith were remaining at the Rectory, many a hard battle must have been fought either by her uncle or herself, ere a medical man would have been sent for: thus risking their servant's life as well as their own. Mrs. Meredith's outcry would have been raised by the imagination of "a long *apotecary's* bill, and no wages of the girl in hand to stop it out of!" — Now, as Honoria felt this reason one of the very strongest for immediate and gratuitous help to the obvious victim, and as she always made her little pittance stretch for a vital purpose, no sooner were the Rector and his lady fairly gone, than she questioned the poor girl, and sent immediately afterwards for Mr. Hudson. His examination of the sufferer's pulse and countenance, ended by his pronouncing her attacked by the

fever: she was, therefore, ordered into bed.

Honoria was constitutionally exempt from ordinary fears; she was conscious of that presence of mind which enables us to be more than commonly helpful in any great emergency, and she was ever tenderly solicitous to sweeten the fate of the poor and labouring classes. She knew herself left in charge of her uncle's household, and she believed it her duty to abide there, do her best, and rely upon Heaven. She, therefore, resisted the good apothecary's persuasions for her to remove to some friend's house, urging, in addition to the foregone reasons, the possibility of her carrying infection to others should she already have taken the disorder from Sally! She was ready, she said, to use every rational means of preserving her own health whilst attending upon the poor servant; and having at last drawn from Mr. Hudson (with an unwilling assent to her motives for remaining,) what precautions were necessary, entered upon her office of nurse.

Her faithful and fearless Hetty was to supply Sally's place in the kitchen.

After Mr. Hudson's departure, and in consequence of his assurance that he had that very morning been into two houses in Edenfell whence the fever had been brought from the hamlet where Sally's parents lived, Honoria despatched a few hasty lines to her friends at St. Cuthberts; begging not to be sent for as had been arranged previously to Miss Mulcaster's marriage, as she must now consider herself imprisoned until the sick servant were well. She wrote also to Mrs. Preston, conjuring her and Bella to keep away from the Rectory, if they valued her peace of mind on their account; and telling them that as Hetty would never be allowed by her to enter the sick chamber, she would answer their enquiries sent by a servant, and would thankfully accept whatever cooling fruit they could spare for the refreshment of the poor invalid.

These duties done, she devoted herself solely to her patient charge.

The promptitude with which good advice had been summoned, or some accidental cause in the girl's constitution, happily rendered the disease in her infinitely less formidable than it was in the other cases, accumulating now with frightful rapidity under the doctor's hands. A few days terminated Honoria's uneasiness; her confinement might have ended too, as neither she nor Hetty showed signs of having taken the disorder, had she not dreaded some lurking infection in her garments, or her mere breath; she, therefore, refused still to admit a visit from Mrs. Preston, who had daily sent every sort of fruit, vegetable, and restorative, which her little demesne furnished, or her cook could make; and she went no farther for exercise than to her own garden, whence she often turned her eyes to the quarter where Arthur's Court stood, and to more distant St. Cuthberts; sometimes feeling a little deserted by the once thronging family at the latter place, since none of them had even noticed her note, left

on passing, by a villager. Yet who could blame their caution, or wonder at their transient oblivion of her concerns, when Isabella was either just married, or on the eve of being so?

Three days after Sally's convalescence, on Honoria's return from her joyless walk, during which she had made up her mind to hazard going to see Mrs. Preston, she found a note in an unknown hand, lying for her on the table. She opened it, without staying to enquire whence it came, and glancing at the signature, saw, with surprise and some heart-flutter, the name of Agnes Clavering.

The contents of this agitated billet banished all the images it had conjured up ere read; briefly, Dora Clavering's existence at that moment hung by a thread. She was lying fearfully ill of the fever. The day she had come to the Rectory with William and Henrietta, they had previously been to Monksden, where she had gone to visit the woman at the gatehouse, who used to talk to her of Mr. Mulcaster. Girlish bashfulness had made her insist upon going into

the cottage alone, so that no one knew she had there caressed a poor sick child, (which afterwards died of the fever,) as it lay on its mother's knee; and she belonged to the hamlet of Ravenswold. Dora's unconsciousness of such a disorder being in the neighbourhood, led her to make light of pains and uneasiness, which too surely indicated infection: danger, therefore, had come on as rapidly as the fever. Miss Clavering had hastened to St. Cuthberts the instant she was written to by the conscientious afflicted Dean. He had actually forced Barrington and Isabella to go out of the house, and take shelter with Lady Wearmouth, near London; he had ascertained the fact of Dora's illness being caught in the gatehouse, not derived from her rencounter with the gipsies, as William madly raved; and having laid down certain wholesome rules for the restricted intercourse of the domestics of St. Cuthberts, whilst a division of them should be necessary, had sadly and solemnly resigned Henrietta to share the

risk of attending Dora until her sister's arrival. This detail accounted for their apparent disregard of Miss O'Hara's forlorn condition.

Miss Clavering wrote at present, not merely to enquire if Honoria had escaped the probable consequences of her pious cares, but to beg, if so, that she would come over to St. Cuthberts; — Dora having often spoken of her, and expressed that sort of sick longing for the sound of her voice, which frequently characterizes disease. Fondly desirous of gratifying a beloved sister, even in a caprice at such a moment, Miss Clavering ventured to hope that her longing would be satisfied, and that Miss O'Hara would come in full confidence that no additional danger would meet her in Dora's apartment, constant ventilation and fumigation being kept up, day and night, throughout the house.

Honoria scarcely read through this letter; but hurrying on her hat and cloak, and hastening to the little inn accompanied by Hetty, succeeded in

getting a vehicle, which conveyed her to St. Cuthberts. When arrived there she was struck by the altered appearance of every thing within and without. No cheerful voices were heard on the lawn, as she swiftly passed along a walk which skirted it. She was not led into the large sunny parlour, where the family were wont to live, between that and the grounds; but silently conducted by one of the servants into a small room in a different quarter of the house, hitherto used merely for Miss Mulcaster to see and settle with tradespeople. The silence and solitude of this little room, (which a huge walnut-tree darkened,) formed a painful contrast with the light, gladness, and happy faces of the common saloon. Honoria's heart was oppressed by the recollection; but not an instant's leisure was allowed her for lonely reflection, not even for composing her agitated nerves. Henrietta joined her immediately.

Each of them had been going through the ordeal of infected chambers, and they could therefore press each other's

hands without fear or imprudence. Their affectionate greetings were broken by mutual tears. Henrietta had much of sorrow and apprehension to relate as a thing past, and much more to speak of as yet existing. Dora's fever had turned, —that is, the crisis was over; but this had been so violent, and her delicate temperament so over-excited by happiness previous to her seizure, that the physicians seemed to think there was not strength enough left to rally back into life. She was too likely to sink away from total exhaustion of the vital powers.

Of their present cause for dread, poor William, Henrietta said, was kept in ignorance; for whilst it was impossible to conceal Dora's imminent danger during the height of the fever, he had been like a distracted man: and even now, she feared, he suspected that all danger was not over; for he kept watching every one's looks and whispers, and seemed as breathlessly attentive to all going on, as he had lately been wildly insensible.

Honoria's heart bled for poor William: she remembered his buoyant spirits the last time they had met! the love and loveliness of Dora's youthful countenance! Henrietta added, that the crisis of the fever had taken place during the night, after Miss Clavering had written the note to Honoria, which some chance must have delayed: that in consequence of the great re-action after such intense fever, the difficulty was to restore the pulse sufficiently, for the purpose of preserving the vital spark. At present, Dora lay without other sign of existence than the faintest movement possible of the heart. Fleeting life was kept in solely by drops of stimulating cordial poured into her lips every ten minutes. Henrietta's lips turned death-white, as she added, "Four and twenty hours, the doctors say, must end it." Her eyes lifted to Heaven, and swimming in tears, told where Henrietta looked to, for relief, or strength to bear. After a few moments' silence, and then struggle with a convulsive motion in her throat, she

said, in a suffocated voice, "Our distress about Jane was nothing to this."

Honoria, in deep sorrow, enquired if Miss Clavering were aware of her sister's present situation. "Yes," Henrietta answered; "and the blow coming immediately upon the joy of finding the fever over, was almost too much." At first, Henrietta thought the fond sister would have died upon the spot: but prayer, earnest prayer, had obtained strength for her; and she was now going through the arduous duties by her sister's bedside, with a composure nearly divine. She had commissioned Henrietta with her affectionate thanks to Miss O'Hara for obeying her summons, though now it could no longer avail.—Dora was unconscious of every thing.

"And their unhappy mother?" asked Honoria.

"Expresses have gone to her at Aycliffe every day: she could not leave her other girls. In short all was severe trial; and Isabella had been forced away to satisfy her father's wish and prayer, though imploring for leave to remain

and share in the family distress. Captain Barrington, too, could scarcely be persuaded to desert poor William at such a time. However, the Dean laid his commands upon Isabella, and she was gone, accompanied by good Mrs. Wood; of course their marriage would be still deferred, until they heard happier accounts from St. Cuthberts.

Honoria now offered her services to assist in sitting up with Dora, should the Almighty spare her to them. Having already got happily through a similar attendance, she urged that they might trust her without fear to nurse this beloved of many hearts: Miss Clavering and Henrietta absolutely requiring rest.

"Oh, will not gratitude and gladness recruit us!" exclaimed the excellent Henrietta; "if such a mercy be granted to our prayers." As she spoke, her father joined them.

Whilst the Dean was sadly welcoming Honoria, and striving to ask some calm questions concerning her own health, William came hastily in, to tell his sister

he thought he had heard her name mentioned in the room above, as though she were wanted. At sight of Honoria he turned away his face, yet put his hand into hers, and without speaking, immediately afterwards followed Henrietta out.

The Dean pressed his hand upon his eyes for a few seconds, then removing the pressure, said, in a tone of deep affliction, "My poor boy! he wrings my heart! his grief so violent, yet so natural: he was so happy! I told you, Miss O'Hara, that we were all too happy." Well did Honoria remember the time and the remark of which he spoke. "When I think of that sweet young creature lying above there — may God in his great mercy —" the quivering lip refused to finish this pious apostrophe, and again the Dean covered his eyes. Honoria sat bathed in tears.

Pausing in his slow walk to and fro, the Dean turned to her again; for sorrow is garrulous. "End as this awful suspense may," he said, "I fear, I shall

henceforth be in danger of loving my poor boy more dearly than we should love any thing mortal. He has so endeared himself to me, by the worthy nature of his attachment to that suffering girl, by the sincere struggle he has kept up with his great grief and his natural infirmity of impatience. Blessed be God, he was never indifferent in his heart to sacred subjects, however he might sometimes most blameably affect to be so! Now, he reaps the benefit of 'knowing in whom to trust.' We are sorely tried, my dear young friend: I love this sweet creature already like a daughter; and it is hard to resign, without some human tears! — but these are permitted to us, by Him who took upon him our nature, and bore our infirmities. So that we do not 'sorrow like them that have no hope." — William's re-appearance interrupted the conclusion.

His eyes were dry, but there was an expression of restless anxiety in them, which the deathly paleness of his face rendered more striking. Every feature

of that handsome face seemed in Honoria's idea to have undergone a change. He was indeed much thinner; and the neglected state of his dress and hair gave him an appearance of perfect desolation.

After a word or two of repetitions, in which his mind evidently took no share, he sat down on one of the cushionless chairs, and sunk into a stupor of thought; his clasped hands gradually found their rest on his knees, and his head drooping over them, he sat gazing fixedly on the floor, seeing it not. It was evident that he had either heard, or suspected, something to destroy hope.

"William, — my son! — dearest William!" repeated the agonized father at intervals, in a suffocating voice. William did not hear. Once or twice Honoria observed a shadow of a colour pass over his cheek, as some sudden emotion shot through him; but it was not the colouring of joyful expectation. Then his features and complexion would become still again, only his lips moving. She guessed that he was praying.

We must have feared for a life dearer than our own, ere we become fully sensible of all the privileges of prayer: or feared for what woman ever holds dearer, the moral welfare of those she loves. Yet even powerful man is taught its blessed efficacy. There comes a moment, when his protecting arm can no longer defend; when the shaft of death is about to strike the breast most dear to him, and he cannot stay its flight. Then he, too, is a suppliant, a dependant! he, too, knows the blissful pang of gratitude for deliverance! The Dean unable to stand the sight of his son, or desirous of ascertaining if any thing new had occurred, abruptly left the room.

The closing of the door roused William; he looked eagerly around, then seeing only Honoria, got up, and hastily turned the key in the lock; he knew not well what he was doing, but he felt the want of being assured against disturbance. "Tell me," he said, coming close up to Honoria, and taking both her cold hands into his burning ones; "what do

they say of my Dora? Is she really out of danger?—I suspect not:—they are so anxious for Dr. Fenwick again! Tell me the worst,—it will be nothing—for I shall not live after her."

Terrified at his words, Honoria uttered an exclamation of horror as well as of grief. He saw what she imagined. "Don't fear that," he returned with ghastly calmness; then after a short and softening pause, "I shall not need to kill myself." A gush of tears burst out with his words, and throwing his face against the back of Honoria's chair, he wept with uncontrolled, yet salutary violence.

Honoria took and pressed his passive hand, as though he had been her brother. "Dear, dear Mr. Mulcaster!" she called him, yet not attempting to stay the relieving tide. William's sighs were sadder than groans; and between every fresh burst of anguish an involuntary appeal to the mercy and pity of Heaven burst from his convulsed lips.

Honoria tenderly insinuated comfort

from the circumstances of her servant's recovery. William caught at her words like a plank thrown to him in the sea. Again, and again, he made her repeat every particular of Sally's illness and recovery; and, as she spoke, the mortal agony vanished from his cheek. "I may hope then!—You think I may hope!"—And, stopping, he wistfully, searchingly regarded her, as if to detect kind deception, if it were in her face. "Bless you—bless you, for the word! Oh, Miss O'Hara, the nights I have spent in walking up and down that dismal gallery, hearing all that passed in that sad room, yet not permitted to go in! I could not have lived through the third night I watched there, if they had not let her say two words to me from her bed, as I stood one moment at the scarcely opened door.—*My* William, she called me. Dear—dear Dora! *Her* William!—Yes—in this, and every world that is to come! I hope." William's last tone, corrected the impetuosity of his preceding expressions. Sorrow makes

us vigilant over ourselves: for sorrow teaches us where we are dependent, and how only we can obtain protection and relief. "I can hardly bear to think," he resumed, "that had I opposed her going into that gate-house this would not have happened. When I fancied she had caught it from the gipsy woman!—No —that was too much misery! But if God mercifully grants my many, many prayers. —You say I may hope?—They did not tell you there is any doubt now?—What sound was that?" And starting up at some sound from above, without waiting for reply, the half-bewildered William hastily unlocked the door and flew up stairs.

Honoria staid to ascertain that no additional evil had occurred, and that Dr. Fenwick was not arrived as William had fancied. The Dean, who was the only person she saw afterwards, gave her a promise of sending instant information when this second crisis of Dora's illness should be over, — happily, or unhappily; then commending their sorrow-

ful house to her prayers, allowed her to depart.

She went by a back passage to her vehicle, and getting into it, turned her sad face homewards, but not her thoughts: these still lingered at St. Cuthberts with the dying Dora, her sister, her lover, and the family sorrowing over them.

How awful in itself was this visitation! How instructive to Honoria! Full of woe to them, and of warning to her, was its probable conclusion. They had perhaps been too happy, because regardlessly so in their great happiness; and she was too miserable under her deserved misfortune! She prayed fervently as she went along, that she might lay the lesson to heart; and that the failing spirits surrounding Dora, might be strengthened to bear and to submit.

In this frame of mind she stopped at the gate of Hazeldean; willing to refresh her wearied soul by the sight of peace and health somewhere, and to

hear once more the voice of cheerful affection.

In this hope she was partly disappointed: she found her friends there in the confusion of hasty removal. All were panic-struck save its excellent mistress, whose serene temper and habitually obedient heart, rendered her calm under every dispensation.

Miss Preston was eagerly re-packing for an immediate removal to a little bathing-place on the coast, whither she had implored her mother to go and stay, until the fever which was now said to be raging in Edenfell, as well as the hamlet of Ravenswold, should have spent its fires.

Bella had personal fears, but she was really more alarmed on her mother's account; as Mrs. Preston's fulness of health, figure, and habit of body, would have rendered her a doubtful subject under an attack of fever.

First by entreaties, and then by a hysteric fit, she had at last prevailed upon her mother to give orders for their

departure that very night; and to avoid the chance of an infected chaise, one had actually been sent for to a town ten miles off. The illness of Mrs. Meredith's servant had given Bella the earliest alarm; she subsequently learnt that other houses in the village were visited by the same affliction. As the contagion spread, her fears had increased with it, until they reached their present climax; so that when she was told Honoria was actually under the same roof with her mother she was nearly dispossessed of reason.

Bella could not muster up sufficient courage to join the party; she contented herself with sending an urgent message to Miss O'Hara. As the latter had been told by Mr. Hudson that all risk of giving infection was to be avoided by taking care not to mingle breaths with another person, and to change every garment worn in the sick room, or likely to have come in contact with such, especially every article of woollen; as she had punctually obeyed these instructions, she had a reasonable confi-

dence that no harm would accrue to her valued old friend by remaining with her a few minutes longer. It was a relief to her burthened heart to relate the scene she had just come from, and the reflections it had caused.

The bright vision of the youthful Dora, as Mrs. Preston had first and last beheld her on the day the party stopped at Hazeldean in their way to the Rectory, was too fresh in the latter's remembrance not to excite her lively sympathy with the distress of all connected with so sweet a creature; and tears stood in her kindly eyes, as she looked at the weeping Honoria, and hearkened to what had just passed at St. Cuthberts. She then besought her young friend not to expose herself causelessly to more risk than she had already safely got through, as that would be tempting Providence: adding to this exhortation several minute instructions which her own knowledge, in consequence of her husband's profession, qualified her to urge on the subject of contagion.

Honoria gave a conditional promise of obedience to the first of these injunctions: whilst Mrs. Preston expressed her bitter sorrow at being forced to quit Edenfell again at such a time. Describing Bella's alarm as nearly amounting to insanity, against which, as it seemed impossible to oppose any arguments with effect, it was a mother's duty no longer to contend. "This is indeed an awful dispensation!" proceeded she. "So sudden! so rapid too! Almost every house in Ravenswold has some one down in the fever. Here it is spreading, and not half an hour ago our man was at Mr. Hudson's, when he was sent for to meet Dr. Fenwick at Arthur's Court: poor Hylton is the victim there. I could almost say thank God that Delaval is away!"

"Hylton!" Honoria gasped. "O merciful God! — and I ——" she broke off in an agony.

"And you," said Mrs. Preston, fancying she was rightly finishing the sentence for her, "you have just promised

not to go uselessly where you may catch this fever. I know how fond you are of Hylton, but you owe a duty to yourself and your family."

How frail are our best resolves! how brief our best aspirations! Honoria, who had just believed herself blest with an abiding principle of submission, now sat as she had lately seen William Mulcaster sit, in mute, tearless anguish of spirit. Dora Clavering dying, — Hylton Fitz Arthur dying, — his brother far away, — his father resolute never to open his doors willingly to her, — what a weight of woe! It seemed to her as if all the winds of Heaven were let loose at once, and blowing on her from every quarter.

"It is too much! — too much!" she exclaimed, letting her head fall upon the arm of the settee on which she was sitting. No tears dropt from her eyes; no sighs came from her breast; she lay still and speechless, but she had not fainted. Life and agony were too busy within her.

Mrs. Preston guessed not how great

that agony was. She now soothed and now chid her, entreating her not to give way thus, but to shake off the strong impression left by the late scene at St. Cuthberts, and with a thankful heart bless God for not bringing heavier sorrow to her own door.

Honoria was absorbed by her own thoughts, and could not for some time notice what was saying to her. The array of death which she had conjured up with too quick a sensibility, blocked every avenue to outward things: in comparison with that, all her former anticipations of a desolated life in consequence of losing Fitz Arthur's and her own esteem, appeared only volumes of passing vapour. Death, visible death was present; showing her how soon, and how surely, both human grief and human joy must end. Yet the awe and force of this impression owed its power to the strength of that very passion which she vainly supposed had at that moment ceased to rule over her. Had she not still loved Delaval Fitz Arthur

with deep, self-abhorring affection ,he probable death of his favourite brother would not have spread such a pall over creation to her youthful eye.

Mrs. Preston's indulgent temper allowed her friend full time to struggle with and overcome much of her strongest emotion; yet when she did find words to speak, she did so with a suffering look which induced that plain-minded woman to say a few things on the duty of moderating such excess of sympathy; telling her that nature could only expect such, from persons actually related to the immediate sufferer; and that religion condemned ungoverned sorrow even in them.

Honoria would have given half her existence at that moment, might she have told Mrs. Preston why her sympathy with the Fitz Arthur family was thus intense, thus aggravated by the consciousness of personal regrets; but her uncle, nay her own principles, forbade her, and she listened, therefore, in silent submission.

Every persuasive which friendship could suggest was urged by Mrs. Preston, to make Honoria quit the Rectory, and accompany her to the sea-side. — Honoria steadily refused to quit her post; since by preserving her through the danger of attendance upon Sally, she ventured to believe Heaven permitted her to be useful where many were rendered useless.

Mrs. Preston sighed, and became silent. She felt as if she were kindlessly abandoning friends and neighbours in their utmost need; especially one left in peculiar loneliness. Yet how could she act otherwise? The claims of her own children (alarmed for her and for themselves,) were superior to those of minor social bonds; and, however reluctantly, she was obliged to sacrifice a sentiment to a duty.

Almost with a boding heart, she would have embraced our heroine at parting, forgetful of a caution exacted by consideration for Bella; but Honoria gently evaded her maternal arms, kissing her

hand instead of her lips. She then hastily answered Mrs. Preston's entreaty, that she would be satisfied with hearing of Hylton through the medium of Mr. Hudson and not think of going to make personal enquiries after him, by promising to write, and let her absent friend know the blessed or fatal progress of the youth's disease. Affectionate farewells were renewed, after which they parted.

CHAP. IX.

ABANDONED as Honoria now felt herself, by all dearest to her amongst her equals, she yet found comfort in her faithful nurse. Hetty Macready possessed the danger-despising character, and active kindness, frequent in the Irish; she made nothing of walking to and fro to Arthur's Court, for particular enquiries about the sufferer there; (Ned the footboy being away with his master;) nay, on an emergency, would as cheerfully have gone to more distant St. Cuthberts: but suspense under that roof was blessedly terminated.

The evening of the day following that on which our heroine had visited it, she received a few lines from the Dean himself, asking her to join their thanksgivings to the merciful hand which had

snatched the beloved of many hearts from the yawning grave. Dora Clavering had got over the dreaded period, and her life was spared. William was completely overcome by it; and having been permitted to speak to her through the door of her chamber, and hear her voice in cheering answer, he had consented to go and seek that rest which he had not even attempted to find for five days and nights of constant agony.

"We have now only to pray that God may see fit to spare us further sorrow of the same sort," added the Dean in his letter. "Trusting all to His mercy we yet employ every appointed means of preserving health amongst us; and through His grace and blessing, hope, therefore, to be once more the happy family we were; more grateful, more humble too, in our happiness."

Never had Honoria known such tears as those which now gushed from her eyes. She had rejoiced for her friend Jane, lately, but the affliction escaped then had been slight, compared with

that which was now lifted from several hearts. If all her joy were not for Dora preserved, and those to whom her life was precious; if some hope for Hylton Fitz Arthur mingled with it, such mixture was as pardonable as natural.

But how quickly did this hope go out, even as it kindled! How could she venture to expect that the only two suffering persons in whom she was interested were to escape the doom of so many falling around them from the same disease.

Hylton's early piety and ripened intellect, which endeared and ennobled him, were, perhaps, stronger reasons for believing that he was not to remain long in this state of probation; that he had already found *the only way of everlasting life*, therefore was called soon to enter upon it. Such reasons blunted the sharpest sting of her grief; yet when she thought of Delaval's return — thought of his returning to find himself bereaved of that cherished brother's last farewell; losing so, perhaps, one of the most consoling remembrances bequeathed to sur-

vivors, that of witnessing a deathbed, divested of its horrors by faith in, and love for, "the only name whereby we may be saved." When she thought of this, her spirit fainted again.

How different would all have been, she reflected, had she not acted so culpably, so proudly, when Fitz Arthur's generous proposal was made to her!—She would have been now where she desired to be, at the bedside of the young sufferer, ministering to him, with a sister's privilege; she would be earning the fond approval of Delaval, and entitling herself to weep or rejoice with him when all was over: or Delaval would not be absent; Miss Clavering's interest would not then have touched him so nearly and Sir Everard, the soft-hearted easily-broken Sir Everard, would have had her heart to lean upon, whilst thus overborne by anxiety: she would have been cheering him, animating his confidence in Heaven's goodness, or joining him in supplication for more support.

From the harassment of similar

thoughts, Honoria strove to turn for pleasurable emotion, to the brightened scene at St. Cuthberts; and for this purpose she gladly accepted the implied invitation from the Dean, and went the ensuing day to share it.

The scene there, could not be called entirely changed; for the great joy of a great deliverance is too awful for immediate cheerfulness.

Every one met her with visible sensibility, expressing the different degrees of their recent suffering, by a grasp of the hand, and a tone of voice, more or less agitated. William was pale still, though now it was a radiant paleness: as he had done at their last meeting, he noticed her without speaking; pressing both her hands to his lips with a strong action, and going out of the room the next instant. Honoria honoured him for the feelings which prompted such hasty retreat.

As Dora had desired to see Miss O'Hara, to Dora's chamber she was conducted by Henrietta; the latter sent

her in alone. Miss Clavering met our heroine with the heart's smile on her lips. She was neatly dressed, as if studious to remove all notion of disquiet and total absorption in her, from the dear convalescent's mind. She had arranged the room itself, so as to give it a cheerful appearance. In addition to both the windows, she had opened a large sashed door, which led out into an old-fashioned stone balcony; this was filled with shrubs and flowers growing in pots. The fresh air from the open country coming in over this balcony, the glittering green and varied odour of the plants, the number of light-winged insects hovering and humming over the blooms, the sparkling sunshine, and the cheerful sounds of life and labour without, were happily calculated upon, by this judicious and affectionate sister.

Dora's little canopy bed fronted the balcony, and as she lay, the sweet breeze appeared to delight as well as to refresh her. Honoria bounded forward to meet her out-stretching hand.

"Dear, dear Miss Clavering!" she exclaimed, kissing it, unable to say more.

Dora's azure eyes suffused, though they brightened, whilst answering the kiss by a feeble pressure: "I am sure you have prayed for me too," she said in faint accents, "and God has spared me for all your sakes. I was so anxious for you, when I heard of the fever being at the Rectory! but you are well, I trust."

Honoria replied to the kind question in the affirmative; but still too much agitated to trust her voice, proceeded no further; she remained sitting silently by Dora's side, retaining her hand in hers.

True feeling rarely requires explanation: both sisters saw, and too deeply shared, her emotion, not to understand and adopt its mode of expression. In silence, the one administered, and the other received the very slight nourishment, which now formed a principal part of her physician's prescriptions: exchanging, however, such smiles and looks as speak more than words.

Honoria had full leisure to contemplate each sister.

Miss Clavering's fine face and figure bore evident marks of the torturing anxiety, and sore conflict with herself, which she had been enduring for the last ten days: yet, to Honoria's fancy, it seemed as if she must previously have acquired a bank of improved health, to look after all, as she was doing now. There was a light in her eye, a colour flying brightly and perpetually over her cheek, and a buoyancy in her step, which told of thoughts and feelings within, as vivid and as buoyant. Peace, more than peace, was then come to Miss Clavering's virtuous bosom! Honoria guessed the cause; and in the present scene was deeply convinced that Miss Clavering deserved to gain, what she (unworthy!) had wilfully lost. Dora's appearance was as touching as it was lovely. More transparently fair, than before her illness; the extreme purity of her skin, made the absence of colour almost an additional charm; the soft blue tint of the veins in

her temples, the languid sweetness of her eyes, and the pale coral of her lips, were in delicate agreement with the snow-white cambrics of her night-clothes. A single frill of lace, or one coloured riband, would have destroyed this pleasing harmony. Honoria remembered the sleeping dress of Lady Haverford, and felt how much more feminine was the purity and simplicity of what she now saw. The vestal moon could not have suggested higher and holier thoughts.

A small book lay under Dora's pillow, and a little bunch of flowers upon it. Dora fancied that Honoria's attention was arrested by the flowers; a brighter light kindled in her eye, (in health, a blush would have mantled her cheek,) and she said, in a playful half-bashful tone, "Dear William's, you may be sure! He gathered them for me this morning, and sent them in." Then in an altered voice:—"You have seen him, Miss O'Hara,—how is he looking? he has made himself so unhappy!"

Honoria hastened to re-assure her on

the subject of Mr. Mulcaster's health: but with the tact of true feeling, took care not to impair Dora's lively sense of what her lover had indeed suffered on her account.

The sweet girl listened with undisguised gratification, continuing to smile, though tears meanwhile kept trickling through her closed lids, as she bent them over the flowers. After Honoria's brief account of Mr. Mulcaster's manner during her first sight of him, whilst Dora was in danger, the youthful invalid lowered both her eyes and her voice, whispering hesitatingly; "Do you think they can be so hard-hearted after all this, as to send him abroad?—he and I would not care how long—how long" (here Dora did blush, and hesitate,) "we might wait, if he might only be in the same country. I don't think, I *could* bear *now*—"

"We won't talk of that just at present, my sweetest," interposed her sister, with cheering tenderness. "Rely on it, nothing will be pressed, that you and Mr. Mulcaster do not freely yield to.—I pledge myself for that."

"Bless you, my own kind Agnes!" returned Dora, kissing her hand, yet still bashfully keeping down her eyes. "I know *you* will plead for us: and Miss O'Hara will put in a kind word. The dear Dean thinks so much of what she says! And dear mamma will indulge her poor altered child. — Life seems so short to me now, — no — no, — I mean so insecure, that I cannot help shrinking from such a separation, such a useless one as I know ours would be, after all that William and I have —" "Suffered for each other," added her sister, finishing the imperfect sentence. "Oh, there is no bond like mutual suffering! Hearts that have always been happy, are never so happy as those that have been long otherwise." Miss Clavering spoke with unusual animation and unguardedness; but recovering with a becoming blush, added, "Be at peace, dearest! I suspect the Dean will be as loth to send his son away, as we should be to let him go; so be at peace." Again the gentle Dora bent her head

over her sister's hand, who meanwhile leaned over her with affecting tenderness.

Honoria mentally blest them both; even though she was now more strongly convinced from Miss Clavering's expressions, that her blessedness would be acquired by the destruction of her own earthly comfort. Henrietta's step without, checked the current of her thoughts.

"Your time is come," said Miss Clavering, smiling graciously. "Dora having already seen the Dean, she must now be left quiet. She is to see somebody else, the very first day she gets into her dressing-room: provided she continues meanwhile to do all that I and Dr. Fenwick command her."

Dora's short fluttering sigh told how much she longed for this agitating moment. Yet with girlish artlessness, womanish apprehension, she whisperingly asked Honoria, if she did not look quite ugly now — so very pale; whether the sight of her would not shock William, and frighten away — she did not injure him, by uttering the words, "all his love."

This was just one of those situations in which it may be lawful, nay meritorious, to re-assure the fond heart which regards its outward case, solely for another's sake. Honoria frankly told her of the charm which she found in her present appearance. Dora's whole face sparkled. "I see why every body loves Miss O'Hara," she said to her sister, as the former closed the door; "it is because she always says or does the thing she thinks will make people the happiest."

William, who lay in wait for Honoria in the gallery, claimed his privilege for Jane's sake, of speaking to her about the being dearer to him than this sister: and to do this unmolested, he hurried her out into the grounds.

It may be supposed with what eagerness he listened to her description of Dora's looks; and when, in fulness of sympathy with his sterling attachment, she repeated what the artless girl had said concerning their threatened separation, his raptures were as extravagant

as his grief had been. Scarcely could he command himself from flying back to the house and rushing into the presence of Dora herself, to pour out all his love, all his gratitude, all his transport. "No! nothing now should force him from her!" he protested. His father must sentence him to some other trial; were it even to serve as long for her, as Jacob served for Rachael,—but go abroad he would not.

With something of her original archness, mingling with graver rebuke, Honoria reminded the rebel of certain dutiful expressions, and religious submittings of the will, with which he had so lately gratified her. William coloured, and admitted the reproof, yet he persisted in his determination.

"I ought to go," he resumed, "and be at Isabella's wedding, for she and Barrington were only waiting for our happy news of yesterday; but I cannot tear myself from this. Isabella must forgive me; dear girl, I know she will! Do you remember Jane's? Speaking of marriages

brings Lady Brinkbourn into my head. What a fool, a wretch I was, to enjoy the idea of mortifying her; talking, as I did to you, of *showing off* my Dora's loveliness, when at that very moment the fever was in her veins, that might have turned all into—I dare not think what! Well has my presumption been punished!" William's look expressed a far deeper sense of his proud folly, than was conveyed by his words: his companion saw there was no necessity for fixing the lesson.

As Mr. Mulcaster's heart could now find room for the sorrows of others, he spoke with amiable feeling of those at Arthur's Court. Telling Honoria that he would ride there that very day to enquire particularly of Hylton's state, after which he would either come himself, or send his groom to her with a note.

With barely voice enough to thank him, Honoria hurried over a good-by! And charging him with a farewell to the Dean, hastened away to her sorry chaise. Later in the day, Mr. Mulcaster's ser-

vant brought a few grieved lines from his master, to say that poor Hylton was as ill as it was possible to be.

Honoria's heart, so recently cheered at St. Cuthberts, now sank again under a heavy cloud. She was almost tempted to write and bring her uncle back: yet when she thought to what danger his return would subject him, from the increase of the contagion round, she abandoned the idea.

Feeling his absence keenly herself, and wishing for his return, she feared that selfish desires might be influencing her, instead of that juster sense which suggested his recall as a matter of conscience. She ought to have acknowledged, that, in a season of calamity, the shepherd should be with his flock; — the Christian minister by the side of his sick or dying parishioners: but like too many other young persons fond of exaggerated qualities, or unconsciously disposed to overlook an obvious duty, whilst straining after a character for heroic sacrifice, she thought her present

decision must be the best one, since it left her the sufferer. Mr. Meredith's duties being faithfully and well supplied by a worthy young divine otherwise unemployed, she believed there was no occasion for her communicating the distressing calendar of their village evils to its absent pastor, therefore preserved what she deemed her disinterested reserve.

Honoria was greatly to blame; Honoria judged wrongly. But I will ask every heart that remembers its own imperfect state, and confused notions at eighteen, whether such present error might not be compatible with future rectitude in action and clearness of judgment. Disinterested, however, she certainly was; for her condition was truly one of desolation. Mrs. Preston was far away, and the alarm at St. Cuthberts too recently over, and the family there too much occupied still with their dear convalescent, to admit of her often seeking a cordial with them. She paced the little grass-walk of her neglected garden, with sad remembrance of happier

days, when with her arm linked in Jane Mulcaster's they talked together in that joyance of soul peculiar to unbroken, expectant youth; when all she now vainly wished for, Fitz Arthur's fondest attentions, only waited for her glance!

Of Fitz Arthur, indeed, she now scarcely heard any thing. Mr. Mulcaster had warned her not to mention Hylton's illness to the Misses Clavering, from whom he wished to keep every distressing incident: yet Miss Clavering was the very person most likely to know where and how his elder brother was. Many an infirm feeling at the time had prevented her from asking Mr. Mulcaster any questions about him, and she could not put such questions formally by letter. She tried, however, to forget all she sometimes heard of the disturbed state of Ireland, to believe that if any evil had happened to Delaval Fitz Arthur, the tidings would have spread quickly through a neighbourhood to which he was so endeared, and to pray that he might return in safety.

If he were not fated to meet the blow of his young brother's death, she thought she could afterwards cease to repine at any deprivation peculiarly her own.

The depression of ruminations like these was for awhile banished by two letters from the south. One came from Mrs. Charles Stanhope, written directly after her sister Isabella's marriage. It contained a brief statement of that happy event, a joyful notice of Dora Clavering's recovery, and of the other dear persons at St. Cuthberts being preserved from the fever, and announced her husband's exchange into one of the regiments of Life Guards.

Well did Honoria recognize the warmly affectionate, ardently grateful character of her friend! — every word breathed the truest and the best feelings. Jane described what she had felt for her darling brother, and with what difficulty she and Stanhope had kept themselves from adding to the family distress, by flying down to her dear home, and seeking to be of use. Nothing short of duty

to each other, duty to their separate parents, a conviction that submission was a duty towards a higher power, could have restrained the impulse. She ended by saying, that Sophia was gone away with Captain and Mrs. Barrington to Lord Sarum's, and that she, therefore, prayed Honoria would come and supply her place. Major Stanhope and she had taken a house near Windsor, his new regiment being on duty there; and if Honoria could not or would not join them sooner, as he was to convey Sophy back to St. Cuthberts after she and the Barringtons were returned, she might trust herself and her maid to his care, and so find a safe conveyance from Edenfell. In short the affectionate Jane would not admit of a denial.

The other letter decided Honoria's acceptance of this proposal, at least her hope that she should be permitted to accept it: it was a short but cordial communication from the Dowager Lady Wearmouth. At an earlier period, its contents would have transported Honoria.

The question concerning the treasure-elephant was settled: the commissioners had admitted the claims of Major O'Hara's heirs; and nothing now was wanting, except some forms and testimonials which only his daughter could furnish and go through. Miss O'Hara's presence, therefore, was necessary in London. Lady Wearmouth added, that she meant to idle two or three weeks longer in town, so that she might be there as well as her house, when her dear son and his bride returned from Sarum; and that consequently a cordial welcome would be given by her to Mr. Meredith as well as to his niece, if it would suit him to bring her up, and remain till the business was concluded.

Honoria's first emotion, whilst reading the account of her being mistress of £15,000, was certainly the reverse of what might have been expected: it was any thing but pleasurable. What was fortune to her now? all Peru could not buy back alienated affections; and if Delaval Fitz Arthur were not already

pledged to Miss Clavering by word of mouth, his conduct must so have pledged him to her apprehension: and, at any rate, his present activity in her service, seemed to declare, that he was desirous of so far involving his honour, as to make it impossible for him to recede.

Over these convictions, Honoria as usual wept long and bitterly, till as usual better feelings arose, — gratefulness to Heaven, a sense of duties and claims, and powers of usefulness coming thickly on, with this sudden increase of means. Many a sweet vision of benevolence and generosity stole before her imagination; many a pleasing plan for herself: — a visit to her own dear country; kindnesses to her childhood bounteously returned; comforts dispensed; the old age of Hetty Macready sheltered and blest to its latest period; her uncle's latter days embellished by some of the elegancies of life, and his churlish wife's temper bridled by respect for his niece's wealth! These and other such natural hopes, flowed like balm through her

sore heart's wound, and at length she could fall on her knees, thanking the Almighty Giver for so great bounty, and beseeching pardon for the long sullenness of her heart to his gift.

The present, at Edenfell, was not a period for visible rejoicing upon any subject unconnected with the general distress, and Honoria was indeed little inclined, in her existing state of mind, to speak of herself to any one. She, therefore, chose to keep the account of this fortunate award still private; contenting herself with more liberally expending her small yearly pittance in aid of the sick poor.

Now, in truth, she found the blessing of ample means; since the certainty of possessing these, privileged her to insist upon the removal of all those woollen articles which poverty had obliged the poor cotters to retain, and which Honoria till now knew she could not replace. The total destruction of some parts of their bedding, and the careful purification of others, bid fair to stop

the progress of the disease, as it had timely done in the village of St. Cuthberts, and the hamlets over which Dean Mulcaster's pastoral influence and active humanity extended.

Mr. Hudson was Honoria's agent in this business; and he, not doubting that she was expending money or obtaining credit in the name of Lady Wearmouth, scrupled not to take and use all that was thus given him.

From this humane and skilful man our heroine daily learned the news of their near neighbourhood.

The calendar of deaths round and in Edenfell was fearful. Nearly every third humble family had lost one or more members: richer households had suffered less; from the mere advantages of freer air, better diet, attendance, and strict cleanliness. At Shafto Place an irreparable loss had been sustained: Mr. Spratt, who had come thither to be the presiding deity of a *fête champêtre*,—Mr. Spratt had actually been borne away above a week ago! Not in a stately hearse, be-

plumed and be-velveted, and drawn by six black horses with trailing palls of white and black, denoting the corpse of a bachelor, — but in his own fashionable phaeton; himself buttoned up to the ears, by way of preventing the entrance of tainted air into his nostrils! Mr. Spratt was gone! — and for all intents and purposes of Mrs. Shafto's, might as well have gone to his grave, *for Mr. Spratt never returned!*

William Mulcaster might have laughed at such a finale to that wily lady's schemes: — Honoria had not even a faulty emotion of pleasure to subdue, scarcely a thought to bestow upon Mrs. Shafto; her heart was full of other things. — Almost in the same breath with which Mr. Hudson mentioned "*the great beau's*" departure, he was complaining of being unsuccessful in his search for a fit person to sit up that night with his patient at Arthur's Court; more especially as this was the critical turn in the disorder; and poor Hylton's life might be lost by carelessness, or

stupidity, or timidity, in his attendant. The careful woman-servant, who had hitherto acted as nurse, was herself attacked by the fever and now in bed. — Mrs. Jones, the housekeeper, had already sat up one night, and was willing to do it still, but being fat and plethoric he feared constitution would prevail even over her zealous anxiety; and if she slept Hylton must die. The crisis of his disease would occur about midnight; immediately before which, and after which, were the periods decisive of the patient's fate. So many of the lower orders were themselves sick, or previously engaged as nurses, that not a competent person remained. Mr. Hudson said, he had too many poor people under his care in equal danger without equal advantages, to believe that he ought to let any feeling of commiseration, much less the idea of reward, prevail upon *him* to pass that night by Hylton's bedside. Yet the agony of poor Sir Everard he described as inconceivably great: he had left him actually weeping like a child,

calling vainly for his absent Delaval, and determining to incur every risk himself, to watch in the sick room in company with John Abbot. — But John Abbot was crippled just then with rheumatism; and his unhappy master had no faculty left perfectly clear, through excess of anxiety, and the weight of supposed responsibility.

As Mr. Hudson, after a long troubled pause, hastily rose to make further search, Honoria woke up also from her trance of thought.

With very little of preface, she offered herself to undertake the care of Hylton Fitz Arthur, during this momentous night, provided Mr. Hudson could and would engage to let no other person than Mrs. Jones know who the watcher was; and Mrs. Jones must promise, solemnly promise, the same secrecy; and resolutely prevent Sir Everard from entering the sick chamber, whilst Honoria was in it. If the worthy housekeeper would take her station in some easy chair, either in Hylton's room or the adjoining one, she

might sleep without apprehension, and Honoria would have her at hand, should any emergency force her to ask assistance. With Mr. Hudson's particular instructions, added to her own late experience, our heroine thought she might, without presumption, believe herself quite competent for the office she sought; — and whether she failed or succeeded, would enjoy the consciousness of thus performing an act of gratitude as well as of Christian duty.

She enlarged much upon her especial obligation to such duty, as the niece of a Christian teacher; besides reminding Mr. Hudson, how much all her neighbours knew she was indebted to the kindness of the Fitz Arthur family, indeed her earliest favourers at Edenfell.

Mr. Hudson at first started from this proposal as injurious to herself, and therefore not to be yielded to without her uncle's sanction; and his consent it was impossible to receive in time: but Honoria persisted so earnestly, and so ably managed her argument of being

called upon to prove by her actions, (when necessity required,) the authority of her uncle's doctrines, that the good gentleman's resistance was shaken. She clearly demonstrated that the risk would be so small, after her late successful ordeal in a fever-room, and the probable good so great, that at last Mr. Hudson was brought patiently to listen, finally to give the plan his sanction.

Nothing seemed more natural than Honoria's desire to have the matter kept concealed from Sir Everard; — since the same pious feeling, which led a young creature thus to propose adventuring her life, must oblige him to refuse her the permission of doing so. That would be selfishness in the father, which in Mr. Hudson was merely assent to reason: he, therefore, hesitated not to engage for the secrecy she desired; expressing his sincere admiration of her character, by a hearty squeeze of the hand. — He was not a man of many words.

The minutiæ of their scheme was soon settled. Mr. Hudson agreed to return

directly to Arthur's Court, to apprise Mrs. Jones, and swear her to secrecy: then leaving her to tell Sir Everard that a most competent nurse was found, he was to come back to Edenfell, and make a written memorandum for Honoria's study, in case circumstances should require her to act promptly in the night, ere he could be summoned. At dusk, Mr. Hudson was to come for her in his covered chaise; she might clothe herself then as she thought proper; but must provide herself with a complete change of raiment, after she should quit the sick-chamber. By attending to this precaution, she might return to her home without danger of carrying more infection with her: except, indeed, it should then be Heaven's will to afflict her with the disease. This, however, was an evil as little likely to happen to her under prudent management, as to the medical man himself; and Honoria, conscious of no motive which her own conscience disapproved, felt and expressed humble confidence in the divine protection.

Ere she entered on this second perilous act of kindness, she wished once more to see the affectionate circle at St. Cuthberts. William Mulcaster had come over twice since her last visit, to invite her amongst them; and to St. Cuthberts, therefore, she went.

Smiles and glad voices again met her in the great oak parlour. William's welcoming hand was the first hers touched. — Isabella's recent marriage had given a livelier tint to their deeper-coloured feeling of gratitude for life preserved, and every face was now burnished with smiles. Miss Clavering with animated pleasure mentioned the circumstance of her mother's arrival the preceding evening, — noticing it not only as a joy to herself and Dora, in the comfort of her presence, but as the best proof of all apprehension about lurking contagion being over in the doctor's mind, otherwise this permission would not have been granted. By Miss Clavering's glow of look and manner, it was obvious

she was yet ignorant of the sorrow at Arthur's Court.

Honoria's entrance was affectionately greeted by each individual of the group, assembled round a sandwich tray; after exchanging enquiries and remarks concerning Jane and Isabella, and thanking the Dean for his welcome account of Heaven's mercy to them, she was permitted to seek Dora.

Henrietta conducted her to the door of the dressing-room, into which Dora now got daily. It was a pretty little room, looking down upon the lawn from a single, but very large window. The boughs of a tall acacia waving freshly before the window, whilst they fanned the air, interposed a cool shade, between those within and the hot glare of noonday without. The smell of the acacia flowers, too, was agreeable.

Dora sat leaning back in a great easy chair, with a small table before her, at which her mother was working, and Mr. Mulcaster avowedly reading aloud to them. The book, however, was oftener

held dangling in his hand, than pored on by his sight. William found it so difficult to look at any thing except his *bruised lily*, as he called Dora inwardly, whilst gazing with tender fondness on the colourless snows of her face and neck! He was evidently as much established in this room as its proper occupant; for his flute and drawing implements were on the table, and two of his dogs lay at his feet.

At sight of Honoria, Dora uttered a little cry of pleasure, and for that moment bloom and brightness revisited her face; but it was a vanishing colour, though the delighted expression remained.

Mrs. Clavering's reception of our heroine was gratifying; she looked and spoke with less animation than her daughter; for her soul was yet awed by a sense of danger past. She now kindly remarked the faded glow of a countenance she had never seen, however, in its brightest hour; following up the remark, by an amiable entreaty, that her

young acquaintance would give the body and spirit rest, after her late anxious attendance at the Rectory.

Honoria assured them all, that she was not in the least ill; and hurrying out some expressions of pleasure at the improved looks of Miss Clavering, added, she had been ordered to send Mrs. Clavering down stairs for refreshment, whilst she took her vacant place in Dora's boudoir.

Mrs. Clavering rose with a smile of submission, exclaiming she must obey, or have her over-anxious Agnes up stairs to fetch her. Then, putting her watch on the table, bade Honoria send Mr. Mulcaster away at the expiration of fifteen minutes, at which time he would have completed his given allowance of an hour.

William waited until Mrs. Clavering was fairly gone; then composedly taking up the watch, put it into his pocket. "We can guess a quarter of an hour," he said, in something of his old self-willed tone. "I abhor the sight of a

watch." Honoria shook her head at him, whilst Dora, with pretty solicitude to excuse her own passiveness at his rebellion, began calling her friend's attention to the variety of things he had accumulated for her transitory amusement when fatigued with more serious objects of interest.

New publications; new music; fresh flowers; little bottles of perfumed essences; a gold vinaigrette with her name on it, in efflorescent characters; and a small alabaster muse, the pedestal of which enclosed one of those ingenious pieces of mechanism which produce music. All these tasteful trifles occupied the table, and were William's gifts. Dora lifted up the last elegant toy, and touching the spring, bade Honoria hearken to fairy voices.

Honoria listened in pleased surprise, for such a toy was new to her. The clear sweet notes succeeding each other sometimes slowly, then swiftly, like the droppings of musical waters, (if such waters be found in the Land of Enchantment!)

did indeed sound as though they came from some elfin choir below. So small a body of sound, yet so perfect; so delicately fine, yet so distinct! it was impossible to hearken without pleasure; and she could not dissent from Dora when she asked, if it would not be ungrateful to turn out the giver of such a dear little *bijou?*

"And what do you find to give Mr. Mulcaster?" enquired Honoria, half unconscious of what she was asking. "I am to have all this lovely hair," he said hastily, with a mixed tone of pain and triumph, "it is sentenced to be cut off. Not one of you shall have a single tress of it."

Dora blushed as she extricated her profusion of silken ringlets from his light grasp; then with a deeper expression in her eyes, said, "I have given him something else this very morning." She hesitated; then, as if ashamed of having hesitated, added, "One precious little book which lay by my pillow all the time of my illness, and was dear Agnes's

comfort, as well as mine. He will often read in it now, — I know he will."

Honoria remembered the small bible she had seen under Dora's head during her extremity; and admired the pretty address with which a timid heart enforced a sacred duty.

William looked somewhat embarrassed, as though he would rather have had his share (at least) in the business a state secret. Affecting a tone of levity, he exclaimed, "O, if I am to be condemned to a chapter every morning!"

"William!" — interrupted Dora, with a look that well became her youthful countenance; then, after a little pause, resumed, half playfully, "You had better not affect irreverence before me. Let me tell you, sir, that when I saw you at church, the Sunday after we first met, if I had caught you staring at our pew all the time, instead of looking down on your book, I should have dismissed you from my thoughts."

Remembering, that he had more than once during that memorable morning,

encountered her eye glancing towards his father's seat, and not displeased at her acknowledging that he was even then in "her thoughts," William smiled somewhat too sceptically. Dora coloured up with quick feeling. "Don't you believe me, infidel?" — William smiled more provokingly. "We'll settle that point some months hence." He replied; whispering in addition, "It shall stand over for a matrimonial quarrel — for I hope we shall have scores."

"Audacious! wicked wretch!" Dora exclaimed aloud, colouring now to the very tips of her fingers, "I insist upon your immediately unsaying that smile." William was all submission; professing himself basely ready to say, nay swear, any thing she chose; for, by one of life's miracles, Dora's sovereignty was restored. He had learned by many a bitter pang, that her affection was his greatest happiness on earth, her life dearer to him than his own; and he had no longer the hardihood to risk one moment's suspension of that affection, by

petulant exercise of his own power over it.

Sweet, very sweet it is, to have our own hearts balsamed by another's happiness! At this moment Honoria found hers healing, at least its smart abated, whilst looking on these young and fortunate creatures. Blessedly tempered by nature to enjoy through sympathy, a call to reciprocate the felicity of a friend would at any time abate the sense of suffering in herself. Her present emotion, therefore, was purely pleasureable.

To her apprehension, it seemed as if this short term of illness had done the work of years: such sweet familiarity of looks and heart was visible between them. If Dora stirred, William's hand re-adjusted the cushions against which she leaned; he even lifted aside the devoted ringlets which otherwise that fair cheek would have pressed into disorder. His eye watched her continually: he saw at a glance what she wanted; he opened a window or drew down a blind, as if by intuition: true as the clock, he knew

the exact moment in which she was to take her fruit or jelly.

Dora meanwhile spoke little, yet looked with fulness of enjoyment: at each new attention, she gave her lover a sweeter smile and a tenderer eye-beam. Honoria thought Dora had never been half so interesting, either in character or person, as at the present instant; and that William, regarding that pale face and wasted form, with eyes of fond devotedness, was elevated far above his ordinary standard by such worthy fondness. William was, however, at length told to go away. Dora said she was beginning to feel too languid for enjoyment of his presence, and reminded him that his quarter of an hour was long since expired. The expression of her countenance clearly denoted that her weakened frame could not, even yet, bear too much excitement of spirits: a moment more, and she must melt into tears from nervousness.

As his reluctant steps turned from the door, these ready tears flowed forth; and

now a sort of contradictory regret mixed with their original causes. "You must think me very foolish, Miss O'Hara," she said, abashed, "but he is so dear! I never thought any one could make themselves so dear as he can do!"

Honoria warmly joined in commendations of Mr. Mulcaster's attaching character; kindly enquiring if any arrangement had been made for him to stay in England.

Dora, in a flutter of doubtful joy, replied, that she believed now they would not send him upon the Continent. It had been settled, that when she was a little stronger, her family were to carry her to the sea, for tepid bathing; and William was permitted to follow them there. After that he was to make the tour of England and Scotland, and she was to go in the season to London. "Then, after I have been shown about there, (how very humbling!) and seen all the fine men, people will not be able to say, I have not had plenty of persons to compare him with; and that, mamma

says, will keep her from being violently blamed, because we are both so young. However, we do mean still, to wait contentedly till William is of age."

"Even one and twenty is such an early period for a man to marry at," observed Honoria, "that I conclude we ought not to wonder at older friends being cautious; so you must allow for *your* friends.—Though I protest I do think in their hearts, they have full as much confidence in Mr. Mulcaster's stability now, as you have."

Dora's eyes sparkled as she replied, "My illness has indeed proved him!—Any other young man would have been shocked at the change in me; he seems to like this poor pale face all the better.—and I—I am ashamed to tell you how I felt when we first met after my fever. I had been expecting to delight myself again with the sight of his handsome face (he is so very handsome, you know); and when I saw him so haggard and pale, as if it had been he that was ill, I thought my heart would have

broken! Yet indeed, I felt that I loved him better than ever. He declares that he was not in the least shocked at the alteration in me; and he maintains it with such intrepidity that I must believe him."

Honoria observed, that Mr. Mulcaster was prepared for alteration in Dora's looks, and that she had not anticipated any in his. The amiable girl to whom this was addressed, felt the kind intention of the remark, and clasping her hands fervently together, exclaimed, "Oh, how I bless God for my illness! It has made me as sure of William's heart as of my own. — And do you know," (here she blushed and repeatedly hesitated,) "I had begun to like him so very much, that I was afraid to contradict any one of his wishes, even though my own mind told me they were rather wrong. — I was so afraid he would take a disgust and give me up entirely!"

To this confession Dora added the history of her picture so unfairly obtained, and so imperiously secured by

Mr. Mulcaster. Honoria felt all the imprudence of Dora's weakness upon this occasion; conscious that as matters then stood between the youthful lovers, it was highly improper for him to have retained such a tell-tale treasure, without having previously got a parent's sanction: but as things were now, his continued possession of it, seemed sufficiently harmless. Dora added, that it had been a long time before timidity would permit her to impart the faulty secret either to her sister or mother: but at last she had done it, and Agnes had gained her instant pardon.

"I shall be so glad," pursued Dora, "when that dear Captain Fitz Arthur comes back! He is the very soul of goodness and kindness, and has such a noble contempt for mere money and rank, that I do think, without being asked, he will plead for us; and persuade mamma, that after I shall have pleased her by going about in London for two months in the spring, I may be suffered to come back here and consider myself quite engaged;

so that William and I may go on comfortably like other people, till" — Dora's blushes, and her sister's entrance, terminated the sentence. Honoria had now no further wish to stay where she was; yet the name of Fitz Arthur had at once unnerved her, and she was scarcely able to rise from her seat.

Miss Clavering came from walking her mother out into the grounds for needful exercise to both; having desired to be called in, as soon as Miss O'Hara was going. As she stated this, Honoria hastily apologized for having staid so long with a convalescent; and exchanging most cordially kind adieus with both sisters, hurried down stairs.

There, entreaties that she would stay the day, and be sent home at night, met her from every quarter: she knew too well what task awaited her at night, to yield consent; and in spite of William's open vexation, and assumed petulance, she finally escaped.

CHAP. X.

ERE our heroine prepared for her expedition with Mr. Hudson, she necessarily put Hetty Macready into her confidence, since by her management alone, could her absence through the night be concealed from the other house servant.

Hetty's astonishment was certainly great, not at the act itself, but at the secrecy with which it was to be conducted. Unconscious of her young lady's actual banishment from Arthur's Court, she clamoured at the bare mention of "her jewel going skulking about like a thief, when she was doing all the while, the charitable thing, 'and the kind!" offering, however, "her own services in aid, or singly, as the mistress chose." Honoria thankfully declined the offered assistance; silencing her nurse's remonstrances upon the other subject, by the

exertion of a little authority. She could upon urgent occasions, utter the words "because I choose it!" in a tone which at once ended expostulations against, or enquiries into, her reason for certain actions. Immediate and greater kindness of manner afterwards, atoned for momentary loftiness. Hetty's energy was checked; she required a moment's pause, ere *her* irritable nerve were quieted; then giving the promise of secrecy demanded from her, proceeded to take her young lady's further instructions. These finished, Honoria hastily swallowed her dinner, read and studied every word in the written memorandums sent by Mr. Hudson for her guidance at night: and as the time for her summons approached, knelt down in the solitude of her own chamber, imploring a blessing on what she purposed.

As the dews return in refreshing rain to the earth they arise from, so does fervent prayer fall back upon the heart, whence it issues, in peace and blessing. Honoria's spirit was calmed and revived by this communion with the gracious

Being whose hand had already bestowed on her so many benefits: her humbled, grateful, and enlightened thoughts acknowledged, that even to her through the medium of sympathy, the mercy shown to the St. Cuthberts family was a most signal one. Great, too, had been her benevolent joy, in consequence of the increased power bestowed on her, by the award of government. With such wonderful mercies in view, she felt emboldened to hope for another, and to her especial feelings, a greater one than any, — the recovery of Hylton through her means. She fancied, with something of romantic exaltation, that if she might carry the consciousness of such a blessing, within her own breast through life, that consciousness would divest any regret, connected with the Fitz Arthur family, of its sting. It would partly restore her to her own regard; for it would be a sort of expiatory offering to Sir Everard for the injury she had done him by forcing his kindly nature to treat her with unkindness; and it would have saved De-

laval from the pang of finding himself at his return, robbed a second time of a beloved brother.

There was even something to gratify such a spirit as Honoria's in the mournful conviction that she, meanwhile, would perhaps be forgotten by them all; or still thought of with displeasure. Assuredly they would never know what she had done to give her repentance the life of action, until that great day when all secrets shall be revealed; then she trusted, that if accepted by *Him*, against whom we all sin, her soul might enter a joyful Heaven with theirs, for an eternity of union and happiness.

When twilight commenced, Honoria stole unperceived by all save Hetty, through their ruinous garden to the back gate, and issuing thence, sufficiently disguised by a cloth cloak and slouch bonnet, found Mr. Hudson and his chaise just driving up under some trees. He assisted her to get in beside him, without speaking, and drove off immediately.

It may be imagined with what emotions Honoria gradually approached Arthur's Court. Conscious only to the purest, nay most pious, purpose, she was yet approaching it in stealthy secrecy, as if about to commit some unworthy deed. The pride and delicacy of her nature were alike averse to a concealment, without which, however, she could not hope to succeed in watching Hylton's sick bed without having the most cruel interpretation put, perhaps, upon her motive for such watching. Had she not indeed been stimulated both by personal affection for the young sufferer there, and by the blameless though fervent wish of preserving his brother from a great sorrow, she could not have proceeded. Neither motive singly, would have been sufficient to fortify her against the possible misfortune of being discovered by Sir Everard in her extraordinary employment, and treated with contumely in consequence. She was, however, resolute to go on from two such reasons combined; and beseeching

Heaven to spare her, if it pleased, from such humiliation as her last imagination pictured, she hastened to preserve herself from being misjudged hereafter by her companion.

As they drove along she discoursed to Mr. Hudson of Sir Everard's kindnesses to her; of her strong wish to save his old age from such an affliction as threatened it; of her tender regard for the amiable boy, whose early piety promised to make his life a highly useful one; and, lastly, she mentioned the sad blight which his death would assuredly throw over his excellent brother's prospects.

Mr. Hudson had heard the current reports, of course, floating round the neighbourhood; nay had often assisted, like others, in strengthening them: but as another medical man regularly met Dr. Fenwick at St. Cuthberts, he knew nothing of Miss Clavering from his own observation. Her praises, warmly and unfeignedly dwelt upon by Honoria, kept him from admitting a single sus-

picion of the latter's deep interest in Delaval Fitz Arthur. In truth, Mr. Hudson had too many important matters to think of, for love and marriage to do more than pass off his tongue and out of his mind.

Her head well covered by the hood of Hetty Macready's great cloak, Honoria alighted from the chaise at a side door, where Mrs. Jones met them by appointment, and silently led the way through the lower part of the house in a direction far from the servants' hall. As they trod the long stone passages leading to the staircases, the housekeeper whispered, "God will bless you, miss, I am sure. Dear Master Hylton is very ill indeed."

"When is Captain Fitz Arthur expected?" enquired Mr. Hudson.

"Nobody can exactly tell, sir," was the dejected reply. "He was to have taken Master Thomas to see Dublin, after his business was done; and so God knows our letter may be following him about, and never get at him till all is

over. My master did not write till he got frightened. The panic only came on him of a sudden in a manner. Mr. Delaval may not get back for a fortnight, or he may be here this very night; there's no answering for winds and tides."

At the bare possibility of such a circumstance as Fitz Arthur's return that very night, Honoria gave such a start, that Mr. Hudson fancying she had stumbled from the glimmering light on the stone staircase, bade her take care, and drew her arm further through his. After reaching the landing-place, her little packet of clothes was deposited in an outer chamber; the trio then entered the sick room.

Old Abbot, who was stationed there during the short period of Mrs. Jones's absence, was now softly told he might go, which he did sadly and as silently as his crippling rheumatism would allow. Mr. Hudson meanwhile approached the patient's bed; Honoria glided to his side.

Hylton was not sensible of their presence; he lay half unconscious, half delirious: his breathing was hot, quick, and labouring; his face scarlet, his hands tossing restlessly from side to side, burnt to the touch. Sometimes he murmured inarticulately in a hurried way; sometimes gasped as if his last sigh were following: at other times he spoke audible words; the names of Delaval, of his father, and once of Miss O'Hara, mingling in these ejaculations with more awful and affecting apostrophes.

Honoria could have "set her eyes at flow," whilst his pathetic voice kept ringing in her ear: but she was there for action, not for lamentation; and strongly repelling every outward indulgence of grief, anxiously attended to the instructions of Mr. Hudson.

His first order was what she herself forestalled him in, opening all the windows and doors, and undrawing every curtain which Abbot's early prejudices had thought right to have closed. A current of pure air was thus admitted

to pass through the chamber, rendering it less oppressive to the patient, and far less pernicious for his attendants.

In consequence of some slight changes which Mrs. Jones had to report concerning the effect of some medicine recently tried, Mr. Hudson remodelled part of his written instructions, expressing a hope that all hope was no longer to be considered vain. "God grant I may not be leading you astray!" he added emphatically, as he saw his youngest hearer clasp her hands and raise her kindled eyes to Heaven. "There does seem a single thread! but it is a feeble one: however, let us not despair."

He then shook Honoria cordially by the hand, and promising to be with them before breakfast the next day, at the hour Dr. Fenwick was to meet him, he took the lamp from Mrs. Jones, and was just passing through the door, when Honoria sprung after him, whispering an earnest repetition of her injunction to secrecy. "You must take care then, yourself," he said, "my dear

young lady. Are you quite sure you can command yourself, if poor Hylton dies in the night?"

Honoria nearly dropped. His plain manner of speaking, and the dreadful event he announced as probable, were equally overcoming to her. She could not for some moments reply: at length with pale and quivering lips, she thanked him for having so far prepared her, that no shock *now* would take her by surprise, and turning from him, she went back into the chamber.

Ere she took her settled station by the bedside, and Mrs. Jones hers, in a great chair at the further end of the large apartment, Honoria succeeded in expressing her anxiety to be secured from any chance of Delaval Fitz Arthur's entrance, should he arrive during the night. From the terms in which she expressed herself, Mrs. Jones attributed her evident alarm at such intrusion, to the ordinary scruples of young ladies. Nothing could be more indecorous than permitting him to come at night into a

chamber where she or any other woman, not his relation, might be watching. Mrs. Jones, therefore, readily engaged for keeping him out, should he attempt entrance. But of this she had no fear, she said, as Sir Everard knew Master Hylton's life depended that night upon a breath, and besides, both he and Mrs. Fothergill would be over-anxious to keep him out of the infection. Indeed, she remembered now, that orders had been given to stop Mr. Delaval and Master Thomas at the lodge, that they might not come into the house.

Honoria was obliged to be satisfied; yet something trembled at her heart, warning her of more grief, more shame than she had yet suffered: she dispelled the disabling emotion by activity.

Hylton's apartment was very large, and not comfortably arranged. How different from the room of Dora Clavering during her illness! There, every thing was neat and cheering: all that reminded the invalid that they had taken or were to take disagreeable things, were

carefully put away: whatever could disgust or deject was studiously excluded. But here, chimney-piece, table, were littered with empty phials — little papers scattering powders — cups of various untasted slops. Delaval was away, whose anxious affection, almost as delicate as a woman's, would have seen even a mote that might have offended the eye of his sick brother. Poor Sir Everard, Honoria knew, was capable of doing nothing beyond feeling stupefied with misery.

With a noiseless step and downy touch, she quickly removed each displeasing object; then fixing the curtains of Hylton's bed, so as to admit the outward air, ere she sat down by him, opened for herself, though without purpose, a view of the heavens and the country.

The moon at its full, was only visible where she sat, by its reflected light on the Abbey walk (as Delaval's favourite grove was called): the broad masses of clear shine, covering the old trees composing this grove; the long shadows

they cast, heightened the solemn majesty of their shade and their stillness; and the extreme repose of the parkish ground lying between them and the house, contributed to the effect of their dark grouping.

It was one of those soft summer nights, during which those who sleep, slumber lightly, those that wake, wake without wishing to close their eyes. Honoria feared not to admit either the air or the light; for the one was without chill or damp, and the other came only in mellowed reflection.

The sweet smell of the honeysuckles on the terrace below, steeped as they were in night dew, ascended in grateful fragrance to the rooms above; and as heaven, earth, and air, pressed their separate charms upon her senses, peace was diffused through her soul. Every thing spoke to her of infinite goodness, as well as infinite power; reminding her of *His ministry*, who came in the form of man, on an errand of far higher moment to a guilty world, yet who made it one

of his blessed purposes, to comfort the sorrowing, and to heal the sick.

During the first four hours of her attendance, Honoria administered the medicines left by Mr. Hudson, and used all the means appointed for cooling the fevered patient, with unabated anxiety. Mrs. Jones occasionally assisted, by going out of the room for trifles wanted, or slept soundly in the great chair. Honoria's sad vigil was, however, cheered by the persuasion, that the sweet air, and the gracious moonshine, spread some agreeable sensations through Hylton. — His countenance lost much of its distressing convulsiveness, and he uttered his wild ravings more gently and more consistently.

Though he still rambled, what he said was in the strain of his ordinary habit of thought, consisting of pure and lovely imaginations of happiness in the world of spirits; humble confession of his own wants; and lively trust in that Saviour, who had unlocked for him and for all mankind, the gates of eternal life.

Now and then Honoria heard Sir Everard's step coming along the passage, and pausing at the door of the outer room, to hearken for sounds from that beyond. At that step her heart stopt its beatings: yet she was assured he would not enter causelessly; and whenever she heard him, poor Mrs. Jones was roused to hasten and give the desired report.

In this mixture of centred sadness and sudden agitation, the four first hours wore away; as they drew to an end, awe and hope arose. By blessed degrees Hylton's movements became less and less violent; his breathing slower and more regular; his eyelids dropt; he ceased to exclaim, even to murmur, till at length his whole frame settled into such stillness, that alarm seized his watcher. She bent her ear to his lips, and found to her unutterable joy, that he *did* breathe; that he had fallen asleep. This was the favourable sign Mr. Hudson had wished, but scarcely hoped for: the crisis was begun, and with happy pro-

mise. Mrs. Jones was instantly despatched with such glad tidings to Sir Everard. Honoria, meanwhile, sunk down on her knees by the bed, watching the unconscious sleeper. So fixed and intent was her gaze, that she fancied she saw the gradual relaxing of his features and skin, as the rigors of the fever abated: she kept gazing on, indeed, until she did see moisture spreading over his forehead. The crisis was past then! — The first crisis! — She thought instantaneously of the second yet to come; for she remembered the danger of Dora Clavering, and for a single moment her transport of grateful joy was suspended.

But how could she forget the signal mercy granted to the family of that young creature? Why might she not trust, humbly trust, that Hylton's blameless life was to be spared, in order that it might become a profitable one? — Yielding to this better thought, and pressing her hands on her full heart, as if to keep in its convulsive sobbings, she struggled against an audible utterance of her tears and her prayers.

As Hylton's slumber was to be preserved unbroken, if possible, Mrs. Jones, after returning from her master, settled herself once more in the great chair, and fell fast asleep.

All was still in the apartment; all in dim shadow; for the moon was risen high above the house, and but one faint watchlight was burning. Honoria might be said to quite alone, for she alone was watching there. But to her raised thoughts, that solitary chamber was thronged with angel faces, bending like her, over the bed of the sleeping boy; and she felt as if her own broken and bleeding heart were healing in the presence of such ministry; as if her lowly unison with it, must be followed by some blessing to herself.

Hylton's purity of soul, and purity of life; his fragile constitution; his melodious tone of voice, and his sweetly gracious manner, had ever been spoken of by Honoria as something angelic: yet it was not in his person that Hylton resembled angels — it was his fervent

love, his joyful worship, where *they* adore unceasingly, which seemed to assimilate his inferior nature with their higher one: yet now, as she leaned over him, she thought his peaceful countenance shone with sacred light.

At the moment of this enthusiastic fancy, she heard the sound of approaching footsteps: Mrs. Jones was fast asleep, and she now could not risk the disturbance of Hylton by going to waken her. She herself durst not quit the sleeper's bed. The person without, after apparent hesitation, entered the outward apartment; he approached: she knew Mrs. Fothergill had never ventured near the sufferer's chamber; that Sir Everard was aware of the necessity for absenting himself. A vision of Delaval crossed her distempered sight; for during a single instant she thought she beheld him: but her eyes cleared, and she saw the anxious father standing on the threshold. Honoria's back, fortunately, was to the light, and her face shadowed by a large dark handkerchief tied pur-

posely on, like a hood. With instant presence of mind, she pointed to the sleeping boy, made an expressive action of hope, and motioned the intruder away.

Sir Everard evidently understood her, for he clasped his hands strongly together, and retreated, smothering a burst of joy.

Long, long after his retreat, all the pulses of Honoria's body continued throbbing with sickening violence, yet she remained steadily by Hylton's side, watching his deepening sleep, with fast-awakening hope and gratitude.

Day dawned ere he stirred. She had closed the windows the instant he began to sleep, and she did not reopen them until the risen sun had dried up the night-mists, and was drawing forth the sweetness of the dewy flowers.

Often in after years, did the remembrance of this night's watching come back upon her with the force of present things. First, its solemn twilight; then the silver moonshine; after that the gradually glimmering dawn, the paling

morning star, the dappled clouds blushing into a red, which no earthly colour can match; then the melting of those clouds into one flood of glorious light!

With these images, came also the memory of their appropriate sounds. At eventide, the cawing of the rooks returning to their nests among the old trees; — later than that, the barking of a distant watch-dog; afterwards, the first low murmuring of the birds in the bushes, as though they sang in their sleep; then the crowing of village cocks; and lastly the thrilling notes of the soaring lark.

Earth has no medicine like her own morning breath, mixing with that of the soft south wind. As their balmy airs entered from the groves and the gardens, and fanned the cheek of Hylton, his eyelids began to quiver, his lips to move; — they parted with a gentle sigh, and awaking he spoke.

Honoria, who had timely retreated behind the curtains of his bed, to shun exposure of herself in the full light of morning, now softly drew away, motion-

ing to Mrs. Jones, who was also stirring, to take her place.

Hylton knew the good woman, and asked in a faint voice for something to drink. He spoke with such feebleness, that she was not surprised to see him sink back on his pillow, incapable of more exertion. Drawing the hood over her face, she advanced quickly, and putting her finger on his pulse, knew that this was the moment to begin administering powerful cordials.

Hylton's eyes were closed again through mere exhaustion; and his senses indeed so benumbed, that she ceased to dread his recognition of her, and consequent agitation. — Again, therefore, she exerted her tenderness and judgment, to keep in his fleeting life; and by the time all the sleepers in Arthur's Court were stirring about the house, the vital powers were once more rallied, and Honoria had again relinquished him to Mrs. Jones.

Still, however, she continued to act, though in the back-ground: she alone, deciding upon the proper moment for

supplying needful support to the patient, its quantity and quality: — what she silently presented, Mrs. Jones carefully gave.

Hylton's first sustained words, were tender enquiries after his father and brothers: — questioning how long he had been ill, and what was expected to be the event of his illness? — life or death? — Affectionate concern for those he might be called upon to leave, and perfect submission to the will which might summon him thence, were so equally mixed in the youthful Christian's apostrophes, that Honoria as she listened, had much difficulty in restraining herself from springing forward, and weeping out her joy and reverence over his pallid head. — She did, however, control the impulse: and retreating still further from his bed, addressed her wordless thanksgiving to Him, who had made her the instrument of so much good to another.

Before the conclusion of her inward prayer, Mr. Hudson appeared. He came

earlier than had been agreed upon, because having just received intimation that Dr. Fenwick could not meet him until two hours later than was appointed, he was anxious to ascertain their patient's state beforehand. As he stept up to the bed, Honoria read in his look the blessed confirmation of her hopes. Pulse, skin, countenance were examined; a few needful questions put to Mrs. Jones and satisfactorily answered; after which Mr. Hudson addressing the latter, but directing his eye to Honoria, said aloud, "Thank God! all is going on well; — he will recover; the turn has been very kindly."

The good man then spoke a little to his patient, exhorting him to confidence, and enjoining him to continue docile to those who nursed him; by which means he left Honoria time to recover from her natural and strong emotion. After this he came up to her, and telling her in a low voice that he was going to make poor Sir Everard joyful, bade her get ready to accompany him back to Edenfell

directly; as his other business must prevent any delay.

Honoria, who had been standing gazing on the bed which contained Hylton, and hearkening to the plaintive tones of his voice, was already blinded by her fast-coming tears: but shaking them from her eyes, she retired into the room where her fresh clothes were laid, and hastily undressed; by the time she had changed, and covered herself with as thick a cloak as the one she had worn the preceding evening, Mr. Hudson was returned from Sir Everard:—he silently took her hand, and assuring Mrs. Jones he would meet Dr. Fenwick at twelve o'clock, conducted his trembling companion down the back stairs.

Hurrying through the shortest passages to the outer gate, he put her into his chaise, and set off at no slow pace.

Released from long and forcible restraint, Honoria's overtasked feelings were no longer able to bear control from lesser motives than those which had kept them under subjection during her night's

watching. Her heart impetuously relieved itself by repeated bursts of tears; which the worthy Mr. Hudson attributed partly to nervousness, partly considered as natural enough. — He did not therefore seek to check them.

When the floods ceased of themselves, he cheerfully asked, if he might not be released now from his promise of secrecy, as otherwise he should find it rather inconvenient, since Sir Everard had actually given him a ten pound note for the supposed nurse.

Honoria in much distress and embarrassment, pleaded still and always, for silence on her share in Hylton's restoration; commissioning Mr. Hudson to use the money in aid of sufferers under the fever.

Mr. Hudson began to think his young companion was "righteous over-much;" and being himself rather less governed by religious principle, than by the mere habit of good-natured action, jocosely quoted the scriptural command, that we must not let our left hand know what

our right hand doeth, and saying he supposed she meant to be a saint on earth, repeated the promise she sought. He then remarked upon the visible alteration in her own health of late, if he might judge from her looks; suggesting the propriety of changing the air awhile. He was not a little pleased to learn, that she did actually meditate a visit to her friend Mrs. Charles Stanhope, whenever a proper escort offered.

"Some little business will take my wife to London," he said, "two days hence; — and if such short notice would not be too short, — if our worthy rector would trust you to her care, madam, I can only say, we should both feel proud of the confidence. — The mode of your going, might be settled between you and Mrs. Hudson."

Honoria feared the acceptance of this tempting proposal was impossible, — her uncle and aunt being absent; and thanking Mr. Hudson cordially, she quitted him at the rectory door, whence she entered, unseen by the under maid. —

Hetty alone appeared; and her active, thoughtful kindness quickly brought her mistress needful refreshment; then induced her to seek rest on her bed.

The immediate sleep into which Honoria fell, from a thoroughly spent strength, lasted till noon, when she was awakened by her uncle himself. — His appearance startled her, but he soon explained it. He was come alone. Mrs. Meredith and he were actually on their road homeward, quite unconscious of what had been going on at Edenfell, when he accidentally encountered one of his parishioners. The details given by this farming man, sent Mrs. Meredith back to Thoresby, and her husband forward, with all the haste of zealous and conscientious duty. The rebuke he gave to his niece, for having from any motive, kept the condition of his parish concealed from him, was the first severe one she had ever heard from his lips. His few remarks carried conviction with them to her heart; and the sincerity with which she then avowed and lamented

her fault, rendered further reproof useless.

A short conversation sufficed to put him in possession of all that had occurred during his absence: — he had to grieve for some of his flock, and to rejoice with others: but the two families of Mulcaster and Fitz Arthur principally fixed his attention.

With downcast eyes, and a cheek on which a single spot of deep red told the agony of fear and shame within, Honoria repeated the account of Hylton's great extremity, and her own rash or imprudent conduct in consequence. — She threw herself upon her uncle's mercy, if she had really acted with a blameable disregard of propriety, beseeching him to believe, that if she knew her own heart, she was guiltless of any desire, any hope, (for such she should abhor,) of so regaining any portion of Sir Everard's, or his son's lost regard. — Conscious of this, and having taken every possible precaution to keep the affair entirely confined to the few persons necessarily acquainted

with it, she trusted her uncle would not judge the indiscretion itself too rigorously, — and accept as a proof of her freedom from all sinister purposes, her present entreaty that he would let her go for some time from Northumberland.

Mr. Meredith had not been so greatly moved for several years. He gave his niece full credit for the singleness of her intention; for her freedom from all expectations which might sully the disinterestedness and integrity of her exposure to present risk and future scandal; but his heart inwardly wept at the act itself; simply, as a demonstration of the strong and hopeless affection by which it was prompted. He did not think, as Honoria did, that the secret would be kept, or need be kept, throughout their lives; — he judged more rationally: deciding that after Delaval Fitz Arthur should be happily united to Miss Clavering, Mr. Meredith might himself claim his niece's restoration to the Fitz Arthurs' friendship, by favour of this generous conduct.

He therefore told her this; and sighing as he kissed her affectionately, added, — "Well, my child! since Heaven itself has evidently blest your indiscreet zeal, I must not seek for cause to blame it. Hereafter, I tell you, you will regain the worthy Sir Everard's regard, and Hylton's grateful affection; — and that, without compromising any of your maidenly dignity. — So comfort yourself with the prospect; and let us think now about your joining my wife in Yorkshire. — Somewhere, you ought to go."

Honoria eagerly suggested the idea of her going with Mrs. Hudson to London, and thence to Windsor: — showing her uncle at the same time, the letters from Lady Wearmouth, and from Mrs. Charles Stanhope, which rendered the one visit a necessity, and the other a joyful debt of gratitude.

Mr. Meredith, ever glad to save his niece from the tyranny of his wife's temper, instantly acquiesced in the proposition; and as only one day after the present, was to intervene before she quitted

Edenfell, he recommended her making immediate preparations. He, meanwhile, would first hasten to visit his village parishioners, and then stretch on to Arthur's Court and St. Cuthberts.

From both these visits, the rector returned much tranquillized. He had found Sir Everard deeply affected by the mercy of his young son's preservation; and totally unsuspicious of Honoria's share in it. — Hylton was not permitted to see any one yet; therefore Mr. Meredith was not admitted to his chamber; but he heard that he was going on well; that Delaval and Thomas were expected every day; and that the moment Hylton could be moved, Dr. Fenwick ordered him to the sea-side.

Seaham was the little bathing-place fixed upon, by mutual agreement between Sir Everard and Mrs. Clavering that very morning; Mrs. Clavering having taken a house there on Dora's account, and meaning to go thither directly.

Honoria well knew how much her kind uncle would willingly spare her,

whenever he could do so with safety; and she now felt that he detailed facts needful for her to know, yet forbore to press the obvious inferences deducible from them, by any comment. These facts spoke for themselves; the two families of Arthur's Court and Aycliffe Castle, were evidently as closely cemented together as those of the latter place and St. Cuthberts: perhaps then, ere she should see Edenfell again, Fitz Arthur would be the husband of Miss Clavering.

Mr. Meredith brought the most cheerful accounts of all at St. Cuthberts: they were delighted to hear that Honoria was going so soon to Mrs. Stanhope; and as he evaded saying, that she did not mean to bid them good-by, they took it for granted they should see her during the following day, and promised accordingly to have a huge packet of letters ready for her conveyance.

Honoria, indeed, had wished not to expose herself to the probable chance of being quite subdued, by taking leave of

that valued family. Parting from them only, would not have cost her a tear, since she was assured of returning to their vicinity; yet tears she knew would burst from her weakened spirit under the present circumstances; for Miss Clavering was in that circle, and whilst looking on her, she must believe she was beholding Delaval Fitz Arthur's wife. It behoved her, therefore, to avoid such a betrayal of herself.

Although her uncle's assurance that she might undoubtedly confess her kind attendance upon Hylton in after days, and so regain the full affection of his family, — had at first thrilled her with the liveliest joy, — such thrill was but like "the lightning in a collyed night," — a brief flash, followed by darkness. The certainty that she must, even so, live banished from Delaval's intimate thoughts and *heart of hearts*, was more painfully powerful than before; she felt that she was condemned to wander over a desert, through the whole remainder of her earthly pilgrimage.

Mr. Meredith had sufficient experience of his own heart's early and lingering weakness, to be either surprised or displeased at the small degree of cheerfulness, which appeared during the rest of the day in his niece's countenance. He forbore noticing her seeming insensibility to the rich prize which was now bestowed on her, and for which he felt animatedly grateful; contenting himself with calling upon her to think and to act for him in small matters, merely that he might so draw off her thoughts from herself.

Honoria devoted nearly all her remaining time at Edenfell, in arranging comforts for her uncle at home, in case Mrs. Meredith's panic should keep her long away. The evening previous to her departure, she spent in going amongst the indigent sufferers of the village, and leaving with each a little fund for future necessities. This occupation renewed her sense of Heaven's goodness to herself; and she trembled to think how long she had shut her heart against the

thankfulness and satisfaction due to such signal blessing.

Having exchanged farewells with Dame Wilson, whom happily the fever had never reached, she could return to the Rectory, and her evening walk with her uncle, in a frame of mind fitted for affectionate intercourse. The next morning, even with the blush and break of the earliest clouds, Mrs. Hudson and the hack-chaise in which they were to travel, came to the gate of the Rectory.

Honoria silently embraced her uncle, and gave a tearful smile to Sally, then followed Hetty Macready into their crowded vehicle.

As the narrow chaise in which these three persons sat cooped, rattled along the open road, it successively passed Shafto Place, Ravenshaw, and Arthur's Court. Far to the right, Honoria saw Monksden rearing its ancient towers from the bosom of its long dark woods; and nearer the eye, cheerful St. Cuthberts advancing from receding groves, as if to welcome or invite travellers. Her heart had a

benediction for two at least of these well-known places, and her eye lingered on their wood-tops, long after the houses themselves sunk from sight.

"Happy, happy hearts are there!" she thought, while gazing upon St. Cuthberts. "O, never be they less so!" — She drew her veil closely round her, as she inwardly murmured this, to hide her trickling tears; — and at that moment some one rode up to the window of the chaise. It was William Mulcaster, mounted thus early to waylay her, he said; to reproach her for having sent to claim their letters for Jane, instead of coming to fetch them the night before; and to put into her hand a little keepsake from Dora Clavering.

William's handsome countenance was quite as much embellished by the fresh air of six o'clock in the morning, as even Dora could have wished to have seen it: Honoria made the remark to himself with her accustomed frankness. Exceedingly grateful for the compliment, he rode for some time by the chaise,

talking at will of all he loved, and all he cared about; regardless of what might be puzzled out, by the other listeners, of his hurried rhapsodies.

William Mulcaster was, in truth, little accustomed to hide his talents, much less his joys, under a bushel. Such a well-intentioned heart as his, had not much to fear from display. After duly receiving Honoria's affectionate thanks to Dora for her pretty present, and repeating numberless loving messages for his sister Jane, he gallantly saluted her hand, and cheering his horse after his old fashion of impatient speed, galloped off, as if an existence depended upon his regaining St. Cuthberts in a given period.

The travellers reached London late in the evening of the third day. Honoria drove directly to Lord Wearmouth's house in Grosvenor Square, where she found the Dowager ready to receive her.

To the ordinary expressions of welcome from her Ladyship, succeeded many anxious enquiries concerning the inhabitants of suffering Edenfell and its more

distant hamlets. Honoria could say, that the fever was disappearing, and acknowledge that she owed one of her greatest consolations under the grief of witnessing its ravages, to the gracious exertions of Lord Wearmouth, for the award granted her by the East India Company. She did this with such genuine sensibility, that even a stranger could not have suspected her of ostentatious charity; she did it, but to deepen the colour of her own gratitude.

Lady Wearmouth then told her what forms she must go through to obtain a regular order for the money; advising her to do it the next day, as Lord Wearmouth might be summoned unexpectedly to visit his Majesty at Weymouth, therefore be unable to accompany her at a later period. As Honoria wished to reach Mrs. Charles Stanhope as soon as possible, and was fearful that consideration for her Indian business had already detained Lady Wearmouth in town, she decided upon immediately pursuing the plan now pointed out. The

ensuing day therefore, under Lord Wearmouth's distinguishing protection, she passed through the official forms, and signed one or two papers, after which she was told that she was entitled to the sum of £15,000.

Lord Wearmouth undertook to place this money for her, where it would produce the greatest annual return, consistent with safety; and somewhat stunned by renewed sense, and visible proof of an unexpected fortune, she went back to Grosvenor Square.

Lady Wearmouth indulgently sought to detain her young visitor a week in the capital, that she might show her the theatres, exhibitions, and public edifices; but Honoria, though in her natural state delightfully susceptible of pleasure from every work of art and display of genius, was now ill-inclined to taste objects of calm interest, or of mere amusement, and she gratefully declined the offer. Nothing less than gratifications of the heart can soothe the pains of the heart; hers yearned for the

sound of her friend Jane's voice, and the sight of her face. She felt, that pressed to that kindly bosom, she should feel an assurance of consolation yet to come. Jane Mulcaster, surrounded by children, would, in after years, be more dear and interesting to her than she had ever been; and in those children, Honoria's own feelings might renew pleasurable existence.

What mattered it, that her youth's hopes and wishes were laid waste the while!

CHAP. XI.

In her present anticipations from a visit to her friend, she was not disappointed. She found Major and Mrs. Stanhope in one of those beautiful residences near Windsor forest, half villa, half cottage-ornée, which draperies of clinging and waving plants cover with beauty, and round which every variety of forest scenery offers romantic drives and walks of wilder charm. Radiant with joy, Jane flew into her open arms. It was impossible to doubt Mrs. Stanhope's happiness; every expression of her eyes and smiles, as she spoke of, or looked towards her husband, pronounced eulogiums upon his power of brightening domestic life; she had been long enough happy, too, from one source, to find every minor thing contribute to its increase. She was delighted with all the

business of a regiment; she was never weary of hearing the band, and having the band; she doted on a field-day; she had already fixed upon certain orderlies and clarinet-players, whom she meant, to take under her especial patronage; and there was to be a review that very month, to which Honoria should go!

All this was uttered by her with her habitual volubility and ardour: but trifles ceased to appear trifles when she talked of them; for she ever showed that they had some connection with dearer things. Every thing military was precious to her now, because her husband was a soldier; the army-list itself lay on her table, only because she there saw the name of "the Honourable Charles Stanhope, Major."

Both Honoria's heart and face kindled in sympathy with her friend's. Jane mistook for that moment, the colour and brightness of transient excitement for abiding health and spirits; and believing her welcome guest as willing to enjoy as herself, gave her not an instant's

rest; hurrying her through house, garden, pleasure ground, with much of her brother's eagerness.

Major Stanhope was yet too much, — what is often said, by way of reproach — *in love with his wife*, to derive greater pleasure from speaking himself, than looking at and listening to her; so after the first cordial greeting, he strolled about their pretty shrubberies with her and Honoria, in eloquent happy silence.

Jane had "millions" of things to tell, and things to ask, and grateful feelings to express, for evils threatened, then removed. The first day was too short for this; the second too short: in fact, deep and dear interests were in her heart, in which she knew her listener truly shared; and neither of them once felt, that although they talked over Barrington and Isabella, Henrietta and Henry Wallington, William and Dora Clavering, without much cessation, they had exhausted their subjects.

Jane had other little confidences to make, belonging to her husband's sis-

ters; and the friend to whom she relieved her anxiety for these new connections, was glad to distract selfish regrets, by awakening in herself a wider care for her fellow-creatures in general.

Amongst Mrs. Stanhope's subjects of unqualified delight, was Honoria's unexpected acquirement of a fortune. The communication of that event threw her into an actual transport. "Now," she cried, "Honoria might leave that horrid aunt whenever she chose; or at any rate Mrs. Meredith's sordidness would make her civil to money: and since Honoria had long ago given poor Fitz Arthur his *congé*, and discarded even Lord Francis Fitz James, and broken scores of county hearts, of course, she must come to her next spring, when the regiment would return to London duty; then Honoria should go about; then some phœnix must present himself, win, and wear her!

Honoria felt, that at least this zeal for marrying off her friends, was a proof that Mrs Stanhope was even happier

than Jane Mulcaster had been; and with chequered smiles and sighs, she evaded a promise, without actually refusing to give one. Only the gloomiest character, or the most selfish abandonment to grief, could have wholly withstood the assiduous endeavours of Major Stanhope and his wife, to make the time pass pleasantly whilst Honoria was their inmate.

Windsor Castle, Eton College, Runnymede, every note-worthy spot, or celebrated or agreeable personage within reach of their elegantly light carriage, were successively visited. Social parties were made on the Thames, or in drives and rides through the forest and home park; field-days; finally a grand review, and the perpetual regale of a noble band, were added to the list.

Thus passed a fortnight; during which, much of Honoria's vivid beauty returned, and spirits sufficiently strengthened, to affect more. Unintentionally, therefore, she beguiled her friends from suspecting that any latent feeling poisoned joy at its source. Happiness was

yet far from her heart, but resignation and gratitude were there; daily disciplining her to look with livelier hope towards peace of mind at last.

Expanding beauty has her flutterers to summon, as well as ripening flowers have theirs. An admirer for our heroine was promptly and properly furnished by the —— regiment, and he was a baronet: but though young, handsome, and amusing, even Mrs. Stanhope could not wish him success, for he was dissipated and superficial. He served, however, for merciless mirth, during their rowing and riding parties, where his officious attentions, quick jealousy, and bad attempts at extracting the lady's sentiments by alternate fits of marked devotion, and slighting sullenness, were often diverting to the more boyish, or heart-whole officers. Thus fled the first weeks of a fine September.

During this period, frequent accounts came from Northumberland. Health there was completely restored; some families were returned, others gone.

Delaval Fitz Arthur had returned from Ireland a week after Honoria's departure, having been detained by contrary winds; and finding Mrs. Fothergill, his father, and brother, gone to Seaham, had proceeded on without stopping.

At Seaham, the Clavering family were now established also, having William Mulcaster for their constant visitant. Dora had rapidly recovered her bloom and vivacity, and was now (her lover wrote) looking as lovely with short clustered locks, as when she smiled on him through the long, willow-like fall of ringlets.

Mrs. Stanhope evidently knew nothing positive from her correspondents respecting Delaval Fitz Arthur and Miss Clavering; but from certain open remarks in her father's and brother's letters, she took their speedy marriage as a granted fact; and, as such, now and then alluded to it with pleasure.

Honoria received more decisive information; and from the pen of Mrs. Preston. This maternal friend (now

just resettled at Hazeldean,) had baited her horses at an inn close to Aycliffe, and there learned, to her surprise and chagrin, that Miss Clavering was to be married in a week; that orders were given for certain preparations in the house; and that Fitz Arthur himself had already been over from Seaham, to expedite the proceedings; they were to be married at Aycliffe church.

Mrs. Preston ended her letter by expressions of regret, as nearly reaching reproach as her kind nature rendered possible: upbraiding Honoria for her obstinate coldness to such a heart; accusing her of ambitious views, of which she never before would believe her capable; and exhorting her with motherly tenderness, not to suffer confidence in a charming face, and now in a sudden fortune, to destroy her relish for calm, undazzling, private life.

Fortunately for our heroine, when this letter reached her, Major and Mrs. Stanhope were gone to a morning concert given by Royalty, and she knew

herself left alone for some welcome hours. During so long a period, she had time to give her feelings way at first, then to curb and conquer their violent bursts, and finally to answer this afflicting letter.

The only reason that had ever existed for concealing from Mrs. Preston Fitz Arthur's offer of his hand, with Honoria's infatuated refusal of it, and subsequent repentance, was now rendered nugatory: Fitz Arthur was actually going to marry another. The poor girl's heart was full to bursting; it was oppressed by the weight of its own sorrow, and by this maternal friend's misjudgment; it was strong in the wish of yielding up its warmest desires to the will of God, but weak in the power to do so: sometimes the pulse of agony was stilled awhile; alas! only to throb again with wilder, sharper pain!

Such was the case now. Soothed unconsciously into a vague, preposterous hope of her influence being yet active over Fitz Arthur, in spite of appearances

denoting a new affection, (a hope for which she was indebted to her military lover's extravagant display of her supremacy,) she had fancied herself settling into complete submission; when in fact she was supported by increasing visions of improbably blissful events. These were now suddenly annihilated; a few short days more, and it would be criminal in her to think, to speak, to write of Agnes Clavering's husband.

Honoria was a creature of earthly mould; fashioned like some, even of the best: conscious to the mutual wants of suffering human beings. At this moment she felt that longing for disclosure and sympathy, which it is so difficult to resist; and she wrote her confession.

It was a letter which honoured the main scope of her character; describing, as it did, the alternate struggles of pride and preference, of delicacy and the yearning to prove her penitence; it painted her sufferings near the bed of Hylton, when alarmed by the fear of his brother's abrupt entrance; averring, that

at that moment she would gladly have died, lest Delaval might suspect her of having come there in the culpable hope of detaching him from Miss Clavering. She called Heaven to witness, that such a hope she would have abhorred then, as she did now, although she felt too surely that her heart could never know a second affection. Self blame had fixed the shaft.

Such was Honoria's letter; almost illegible from the tears that had dropt on its hurried pages. Yet, no sooner was it gone, than she would have given half her remaining existence to have got it out of the post-office. Every expression it contained, now seemed indelicate or uncalled-for: even to write one of more moderate character would have been a weakness; but to have written this, was an act to blush at for ever! Thrilling with shame after this first offence against womanly reserve, she wholly stifled the affectionate impulse which often had prompted her to give the ingenuous Jane a full view of her desolated heart.

Having taken a long aimless walk under a burning sun, whilst distractedly revolving these thoughts, she was enabled to plead that, as the cause of her altered looks, when her friends returned from the royal residence; and this excuse, aided by the arrival of dinner company, assisted her in getting through the evening without exciting more than the kind solicitude due to bodily inconvenience.

The following morning her own attention was called upon as well as that of Mrs. Stanhope, by making arrangements for the reception of Captain and Mrs. Barrington. They wrote to say, that they were coming to pass a week at Beech Lodge, ere they proceeded to join the Dowager Lady Wearmouth on a visit to the young countess and their brother. Sophia Mulcaster having found a safe escort into Northumberland was already gone; they came, therefore, only with a servant or two in their train.

Jane, all joy and business, never so happy as when thinking of, or making

people comfortable, began an instant tour of her house, as though she had its small topography to learn; seeking out the pleasantest apartment for her sister.

One large sleeping-chamber, two dressing-closets, and a sunny sitting-room, *en suite*, were not to be found in Beech Lodge; each desired room might be had separately, but how to conjure them together! The thing was not to be done. Jane was obliged to sigh and resign herself.

Honoria softened some difficulties, by insisting upon the renunciation of two pleasant chambers occupied by her, and exchanging them for what Major Stanhope called "a comfortable couple of birds' nests" at the top of the house.

In removing Honoria's little personals, and in settling Mrs. Barrington's apartments, (amply as they were previously supplied with comforts,) by transporting to them sundry elegant and useful trifles, from her own boudoir, Mrs. Stanhope employed the next two mornings. Ho-

noria, who shared gladly her busy idling, noticed with what cheerfulness Major Stanhope gave way to her sisterly fondness, allowing Jane to treat him as if he were literally a part of herself, when in her generous grasp for others not half so dear to her, she snatched away even some of his peculiar possessions.

The arrival of Captain and Mrs. Barrington converted these pleasing cares into perfect transport. The soft and blushing happiness of Isabella (even yet fearing her marriage censurable,) was vividly contrasted by the joyous openness of Jane's; and in the sun on her sailor's manly brow, nothing but fulness of satisfaction in his choice could be discerned.

Honoria was greeted by both with kind cordiality; Captain Barrington congratulated her upon her 'tight little prize,' as he called her £15,000; owning that he envied his brother for having got the business through for her; since it should have fallen to his share by right, as he was the person under such ever-

lasting obligation to her uncle in India. He then told her in a whisper, that the Admiralty had no orders for him before the spring, till when, he meant to be as happy as possible; living about amongst his friends with Isabella, ere they anchored, as they had promised, at St. Cuthberts.

Once more family and county details were put into requisition, and again they were listened to with affectionate interest, or mere pleasantry. Captain Barrington amused himself much with Mr. Mulcaster's impatient passion; yet owned, that although he must say *his* miserable exile had lasted four years without a word of comfort being allowed to *him*, still he could pity the lucky fellow who was only going through the probation of a twelve-months' separation with both parties on the same *terra firma*. He added to this, a few current jokes about marriage being a better sort of suicide, a tether on an ass's leg, &c. &c., which uttered with the simplicity of conscious nonsense, and a look of undisguised fondness at his wife, ceased to appear commonplace, but came

with a charm from him. Such is the magic of manner and of heart.

Honoria's sympathy with this happy family party was not destined for long continuance. Two days after the Barringtons' arrival, a short letter from her uncle summoned her without delay to Edenfell. Mrs. Meredith, who was recently returned to the Rectory, had been attacked soon afterwards by an internal inflammation, in consequence of standing out on the wet grass after being much overheated. Her life was despaired of; and Mr. Meredith, though not in utter desolation at the prospect before him, required the comfort of his niece's presence; such a summons did not admit of a question: the only difficulty was how to get Honoria properly conveyed to such a distance, as Major Stanhope could not at that precise moment quit his regimental duty. Captain Barrington promptly offered himself; and it was settled, that he should accompany her and Hetty as far as they could go during the first long day and night, (Honoria refused to waste

time by sleeping on the road,) and having seen them so far on the journey, which would terminate ere the second night, he was to make the best of his way back in, or on the mail.

This arrangement concluded, and her few other preparations completed by the side of her weeping, affectionate, yet uncomplaining Jane, Honoria saw the hour of separation come. More tenderly attached to the friend she was leaving, than she had ever been, she fervently returned Mrs. Stanhope's many clasping pressures, yielded her cheek to the momentary touch of the Major's lip, and exchanged a smiling embrace with Isabella; for Isabella was soon to follow where she went.

They travelled in a hack-chaise with four horses, and they began their journey with the peep of day. Our heroine's thoughts were too intent upon her uncle's present distress of mind, to allow of her conversing much with her companions. Captain Barrington considerately drew forth a magazine, and a news-

paper, telling her not to mind talking to him, for he had plenty of store ; and their rapid journey therefore was for a long time performed in silence.

When he could do so, however, without obviously annoying, he sought to engage her attention by little sea-anecdotes, interesting to her from their novelty, and from the manly plainness with which they were told. His concise remarks upon these, evinced both depth of reflection and of feeling ; and she no longer wondered that Isabella Mulcaster, once loving his unadorned sense and high integrity should find most other men inconsequent, or not sufficiently firm in principle.

A fine moonlight through the night, and a bright dawn the succeeding day, rendered their night travelling safe, and their further progress pleasant ; and no sooner did they reach the point, where Captain Barrington was to meet the mail, than having previously seen Honoria eat some breakfast, he saw her and Hetty into a fresh chaise, and bade them a cordial farewell.

At his departure, Honoria's spirits sunk at once into solemn revery, for though she could not be said to contemplate Mrs. Meredith's death with any grief, she felt concern for her as a very imperfect human being, hastening to her last dread account, without (hitherto) any vital sense of her own spiritual wants. She knew, too, that her uncle's awe from similar thoughts, would be mixed with a kindly oblivious feeling, akin to sorrow. But after the first painful emotions were over, she trusted peace would settle upon their unboastful home. Mrs. Meredith's removal would enable her to dedicate herself without self-sacrifice to the pleasing duty of smoothing her uncle's declining years. Providence had just bountifully supplied her with the means of greatly enlarging his personal comforts; and so favoured, ought she to continue looking on life as it now stretched before her, with loathing often, and weariness? Was it not wicked in her to let such a death-weight as yet rested on her heart, remain there in the midst of such

signal blessings, as a dear relative, attached friends, and competence of fortune? Had not the Almighty graciously allowed her to be his instrument of mercy to the family dearest to her on earth? And was she to refuse him the tribute of gratitude, and a submitted will, because a single blessing was withheld—a blessing too, once offered, and proudly rejected?

Contrite, though still, alas! weakly dejected, she had proceeded within two stages of Edenfell, when she saw advancing up a cross road, (the end of which, her chaise was passing,) a carriage and four at full gallop. Very soon afterwards, she heard the hoofs of the horses, and the swift motion of the wheels behind her own vehicle. Her driver drew off a little, to give way; and the carriage passed.

It was a light post-chariot, and the postilions had favours in their caps. She heard, or fancied she heard, the distant peal of joyful bells; one thought only rushed upon her: she had not seen the persons in the carriage, but she knew that

Aycliffe lay a little off this very road, and the more open one, along which they were now preceding her, led to Arthur's Court, as well as to Edenfell. Another moment put an end to doubt. A horseman passing through the turnpike which had opened for this equipage, enquired who was married. The answer called out after him, reached Honoria's open window: "Miss Clavering," was the reply, "and Captain Fitz Arthur!" Honoria forgot that she was not alone; and clasping her hands with a convulsive gasp, fell back against the side of the chaise.

Her faithful Hetty had long suspected, and secretly mourned over her young mistress's blighted expectations; and believing her sacrificed for Miss Clavering's wealth, she began, with true Hibernian energy, to invoke something very like a curse upon the heads of the hapless pair. Her vindictive expressions more than supplied the place of the powerful stimulants usually resorted to upon similar occasions: the latter

could not have roused a dying heart; — but Honoria's was yet alive to every thing injurious to Fitz Arthur and the woman he had made his wife. Rallying all her strength, yet with grateful care of her fond nurse's irritability, she besought her immediate silence; adding, that if ever she reported this momentary weakness of her foster-child, that moment would give the death-blow to Honoria's peace.

"If you really love me as your child, dear Hetty," she said, melting into tears, and throwing her arms round her neck, "spare me even to my humbled wretched self! Delaval Fitz Arthur has acted generously by me! I only am to blame — indeed, indeed, I am."

The fast increasing tears of Honoria, had more effect upon Hetty than her arguments and entreaties. The kind creature covered the weeping girl's hands, her brow, her eyelids, with such tender kisses, as she had often bestowed upon them in the days of helpless, wayward infancy. The remembrance of those

days sanctified her present freedom; and Honoria showed how dearly she too remembered them, by the unrestrained confidence with which she strained her nurse to her breast, and returned her many kisses.

Soon, however, Hetty's reiterated promises of secrecy, and assurances that she would *try* to think well of Captain Fitz Arthur, were uttered to one who heard them no longer. Honoria quickly lost all consciousness from the senses, whilst she remained leaning back in the chaise, with her eyes closed against outward objects, her thoughts solely employed upon the past and the future — her distempered mind seeing (as if with the actual sight,) nothing but that flying equipage.

She knew that an everlasting wall was now raised between her and the man who had been devoted to her so long and so exclusively; that she was returning to pass her days where he would pass the greatest proportion of his, and where she would gradually see him and

the happy woman he had chosen, surrounded by a race like themselves. — Hers, then, would be such a punishment as had fallen upon the first wilful forfeiters of paradise. Such was the deserved doom of a proud resentful heart!

Honoria felt humbled to the dust, whilst owning that such a heart is more offensive to the meek and lowly Jesus, than all the violences of mere temper. She thought how often and how arrogantly she had considered herself righteous, in comparison with the ignorant and ill-governed Mrs. Meredith; and she could at this moment bless God for having, by any chastisement, however severe, brought her to a just sense of her own nature.

Such reflections produced in her the effect of prayer—nay, they were prayers. By degrees her tears ceased, and only heavy sighs, like gusts shaking off eavesdrops, now and then proclaimed some sudden pang. In this state of mixed dejection and submission, she reached

the inn at which they were to change their chaise.

Whilst Hetty was seeing to the safe conveyance of the baggage from one vehicle to another, and hastening the ostler, Honoria was shown into a little retired room looking upon a garden. She advanced mechanically to the window, and gazed over beds of flowers and rustic arbours, without knowing what she looked on. Her eyes were flooding again, as with folded hands and quivering lips, she inarticulately invoked blessings upon the heads of Fitz Arthur and his bride: but her soul was comforted by the belief that he had made a worthy choice.

Even as she murmured this broken exclamation, a hurried attempt at opening the door of the room from without made her turn round; the lock gave way, the door was as hastily opened, and she beheld Fitz Arthur himself.

His countenance, almost emitting rays, announced the rapturous bridegroom; or rather it said, that happiness was in his

hand, but not yet taken to his arms. There was apprehensive as well as joyful tremor in his step and voice.

Honoria knew not what he was saying; she saw him only an instant. Her head swam, her senses forsook her, and she fell at once to the ground. How he recovered her, when he recovered her, she was not conscious of. Her first waking sensation was that of finding herself supported on some one's breast — a breast heaving strongly under her. She gazed wildly up, but closed her eyes directly again, to shut out the light of his.

Whisperings of love, and hope, and transport, were confusedly in her ear. Tumultuous throbs of the heart pressing against hers, awakened all her own pulses — she knew that she was still clasped in Fitz Arthur's arms, and all distracted with shame and anger, struggled forcibly to get from him.

"Release me — release me!" she cried. "Your wife! — your wife! — for God's sake — her sake, let me go." Every artery of her body was nearly

bursting; she felt insulted beyond the power of forgiveness, and by Fitz Arthur too!

"Dearest Honoria!" exclaimed he, yet still detaining her, "I have no wife; and never will, unless the long-loved one here! O, why should I disguise it!" he exclaimed, interrupting himself with manly sincerity. "Did I not believe now I am not indifferent to you, Honoria, would I, could I dare my present conduct?" Much more Fitz Arthur added, which might be wearisome if given at lover's length. Briefly, he acknowledged having seen the last letter to Mrs. Preston, shown him at the moment when hastening to give Miss Clavering's hand at the altar to another man; his full heart had poured out its own griefs to this friend of his boyish years.

Honoria, when she could extricate herself from his arms, sat with her face buried in her hands and hair, trembling all over, from excess of joy and of shame. She was unable to look on him, before whom her whole repentant heart had been displayed by a kindly faithless con-

fidant. Fitz Arthur almost begrudged himself his fervent transport, when he saw by what cruel sufferings in her dearer breast, he was securing the bliss of his.

Timid, tender respect succeeded to rapture in his tones and actions. He poured out his gratitude for her heroic self-devotion to Hylton; painted the yearning of his father in consequence, to call her his daughter; and finally succeeded in recovering her to some feeling of personal regard, after her agony of humiliation.

With many a burning blush, and gasping sigh, did she at last suffer her trembling hand to fall into his, in token of the consent she could not give by words. Fitz Arthur strained that little hand to his lips and to his heart; again and again renewed the eloquent demonstrations of a rapture, which till now he had feared to indulge so freely, and uttered something about the day that was to give her to him for ever.

Honoria now faltered out a short ac-

count of the cause of her present journey, of which he seemed wholly ignorant, and at which he was greatly shocked. He saw from her manner that she wished to proceed without delay; that it was for a purpose which ought to silence for a while every expression discordant with the solemn image of death, and he felt obliged, therefore, to yield her up to duty.

Having frankly said all this, and confessed that although he must not ask to become her companion to Edenfell, he would follow as her protector thither, he offered to go and expedite the chaise preparing for her and Hetty. As he got to the door, his hand rested on the lock, "You are — you will be mine!" he half questioned: "Only assure me, Honoria, that nothing but death shall now divide us, and I will let you go from me without complaint. I will submit to any future trial you may please, of my love, my humbleness, so you grant me now this blessed assurance."

"O Captain Fitz Arthur!" exclaimed

Honoria, smiling through tears and blushes, "You know, — you know only too well," — (she hesitated) — "that I am wholly yours."

Her voice extinguished with the last words, accompanied as they were by a thrilling glance instantaneously withdrawn. It was the first, the only time she had dared to look at him since their meeting, and Fitz Arthur's senses were so disordered by it, his transport so great, that whether he had immediately snatched her hand to his lips, or herself to his heart, neither he nor she exactly knew the moment after.

Fitz Arthur's disappearance, then his return to her, Hetty's entrance, their transfer to the chaise, were circumstances witnessed and gone through by Honoria as though she were in a dream: she could not recover the conviction of being actually awake, and when after the chaise had driven them away from the little inn, she saw but Hetty by her side, nor saw, nor heard the sole object in her thoughts, she had to ask her

nurse if they had really just parted from Delaval Fitz Arthur.

Hetty's joy was now privileged to express itself, and from her voluble communications, Honoria learned, that Fitz Arthur had been directed where to find her, by having seen Hetty at the inn-door as he was galloping past. That Miss Clavering was indeed married that morning, but to Lord Francis Fitz James, and that "the Captain himself" had told the anxious Irishwoman that he was then going in expectation of finding her lady at Major Stanhope's.

All was surprising and strange, yet as blessed as unaccountable; and whilst Honoria recalled the looks and language of Delaval on the present occasion, and thought of his tried virtues, and his long slighted attachment, her bitter sense of degradation abated. She felt that such a guide through life was not too dearly bought at the expense of some portion of that power, which woman's delicacy (not policy) induces her to retain; and which *is* retained only by those who

may reserve the utmost avowal of their affection from him, on whom it is otherwise unboundedly bestowed.

At this moment Honoria could not regret any thing; she was plighted to Delaval Fitz Arthur, she was restored to the paternal fondness of his father, she would be Hylton's sister! her days would pass in dear, dear Arthur's Court!

There was much more also, she understood, for her to hear and rejoice at. Miss Clavering's sudden, or mysteriously arranged reunion with the object of her first love, was one of the agreeable circumstances to be explained hereafter. For that, and every other explanation, our heroine was content to wait, whilst assured of the one great fact, that she was now contracted to the dearest and best of earthly creatures: and she sat in smiling, tearful silence, listening with a gratified ear to the artless, the ardent bursts of Hetty Macready's joy. Miss Clavering, or rather Lady Francis Fitz James, had now as many blessings invoked for her, as ever the invoker had

uttered, and inwardly called down upon her head, visitations of a different nature: every flower of Hibernian eloquence was ransacked, for newer and more abundant modes of blessing Honoria and Delaval; which extravagant as they were, could not fail of being welcome to her that heard them.

On reaching the Rectory, joy had a pause, — the closed shutters, and solemn stillness, announced the death of Mrs. Meredith. She had died in the night, and Honoria, by the utmost exertion, could not have arrived in time to find her alive. Shocked and afflicted for her uncle, our heroine silently entered the house, and as silently met and returned Mr. Meredith's embrace: some tears from both their eyes, mingled on their cheeks, they rose from each other's folding arms, with only a few whispered words, after which, Honoria resolutely entered upon every mournful duty left her to perform.

The first few days of awful mourning were over, before Honoria even hinted

to her uncle what had occurred in her way to Edenfell. She did not speak at all of her own blessedly altered feelings and prospects, until she might do so without danger of appearing slightly affected by the late dispensation.

Such a detail threw sudden sunshine over the gloom inseparable from a chamber of death. Mrs. Meredith's situation had kept the Rector from knowing any thing of what was going on amongst distant neighbours; and indeed neither the family at St. Cuthberts nor at Arthur's Court had returned from Seaham, till the evening preceding Miss Clavering's marriage; they had then met on the bridal morning at Aycliffe; where the Mulcaster family remained for the customary task of comforting the bereaved mother and sisters: but Sir Everard and Delaval Fitz Arthur had come back immediately after the ceremony (as it now appeared) for the purpose of despatching the latter more readily to Windsor.

Honoria could not relate the parti-

culars of her letter to Mrs. Preston, without visible shame ; nay, she expressed the feeling ; and professed herself ready to bear her uncle's severe rebuke for having written such a letter. Mr. Meredith was not inclined to censure her, as the facts of the case now appeared ; and his judicious reasoning, aided by affectionate participation of her happier emotion, at length reconciled her to herself.

No sooner were Mrs. Meredith's remains consigned to the grave, than the doors of the changed Rectory opened to welcome their impatient friends from Arthur's Court.

What were the feelings of all parties when they met again in the fulness of perfect confidence, after such a period of total alienation! Sir Everard's parental welcoming of Honoria, as he clasped her in his arms, was coupled with loud arraignment of himself for obstinate resentment and wicked credulity, in so readily believing all which Mrs. Shafto had insinuated and said.

He declared himself quite satisfied that after such mortifying conduct from his unworthy kinswoman, it was not to be expected that a young girl should act differently from what Honoria had done on that occasion. However, since the sorrow and wrong were over, he could forgive even the injurer. In truth, so kindly a nature as the Baronet's, in returning to its natural course of affection, would not stay to bring poison with its stream: he left the subject of Mrs. Shafto's malignity almost immediately. But the theme of what he owed to the fearless, tender watcher by his son's sick-bed, was not so soon exhausted: with that, the father's heart flowed out; and the kiss he sealed upon Honoria's lips, as he claimed her for his daughter, sanctified the remembrance of that night's watching for ever.

In the gentle Hylton's thanking and fraternal embrace, Honoria lingered longest. Hylton's youth, his delicacy, his modestly whispered gratitude to her, but chiefly to that God whom both

sincerely worshipped, privileged her in this self-indulgence. It was sweet to pour out upon him, the excessive tenderness and joy which respect for the one, and maidenly reserve with the other, kept her from testifying in an equal degree to Sir Everard and Delaval.

Again and again her affectionate embrace replied to the feeble pressure of the agitated boy; meanwhile, his elder brother stood looking on, his heart in the gaze, not unconscious perhaps that Hylton owed much of his present lavish favour, to a stronger and more restrained sentiment for himself.

After full effusion of his sensibility, Sir Everard, desirous of having some private conversation with Mr. Meredith upon subjects necessary to be discussed before every marriage, but always odious to the parties themselves, motioned to his eldest son to remove himself and his fair betrothed out of the room, desiring Hylton to find amusement in a book. Delaval lost no time in obeying.

Honoria soon found that he had be-

guiled her into her own garden, and that he was talking to her of herself. From his lips even such a theme was delightful to her: and as that noble heart unconsciously displayed its lavish stores of virtues and affections; as she listened to the vivid description of its struggles, its hopes, its bitternesses, its disappointments (with all of which her image was connected); she felt that a life dedicated to secure such a heart's happiness, would be too short for proof of her gratitude in its possession.

Her own histories were confessions: for though she scarcely yet durst lift up her eyes to Delaval, she magnanimously persevered in the self-imposed penance of fully detailing the effect of the Shafto family's ceaseless affronts, and of her own proud obstinacy, preceded as it had been, by the weak folly of momentary dazzlement by Lord Francis Fitz James's reported perfections. To the real being himself, she could boldly say, neither her heart nor her imagination had once yielded an instant of particular admiration.

Delaval was little inclined to interrupt her. The blushing cheek, and tear-bright eyes of eighteen, carried with them full apology for a mere error of inexperience; and for Honoria's graver fault of proud resentment, atonement was amply given in the candour of its acknowledgment. "Such is the faulty, blinded heart, you have coveted, Delaval," she said, as she concluded her narrative, reviving to something of her natural playfulness, perhaps to check the tears ready to flow from excess of tender remorse. "To care for such an unworthy creature has been your only folly; as far as I am permitted to see!—So I think I may safely trust to you, for making me something like your best self, at last."

Of course the words *best self,* were immediately seized by her lover as the key note for many a fond flattery; such as every person who has ever been in love, or ever been made love to, must well remember. His eloquence and ingenuity were not thrown away: for though I do aver he did not seek to abate one

particle of that self-distrust, (which to be efficient in us, after grave offences, must be an abiding principle,) he succeeded in recovering Honoria's smiles, and the answering sunbeams of her eyes.

From their own immediate prospects, they turned at last to those of others professedly and deservedly interesting to both. Honoria then heard the little mystery of Miss Clavering's marriage.—What Delaval told, amounted to this.

The attachment which Miss Clavering had conceived for Lord Francis, (then Mr. Fitz James,) when she saw him devoting himself to his dying sister, was never really conquered. His own imperious temper alone had silenced its expression. He had not merely exacted of herself, but demanded from her father, such reliance upon his bare word of honour, as no parent could be satisfied with, when a suspicious act required explanation. Agnes fully trusted to her lover's veracity, and told him so; yet she steadily refused to fulfil her engagement with him, until he should thoroughly

clear himself to General Clavering; upon this point, they broke. After her father's death, poor Miss Clavering had yet greater trials to endure. Mrs. Branspeth was a prejudiced, rigid-tempered woman, and as she was explicit upon the subject of Lord Francis, her hopeless heiress soon found, that unless she culpably abandoned her mother and sisters to penury, by forfeiting for them, as well as for herself, any advantage from their rich relative's favour, she must never give ear to her lover whilst Mrs. Branspeth lived. This necessity Agnes had an opportunity of explaining to Lord Francis when he followed her to Bath, soon after his masquerading observation of her at the Arthur's Court ball had assured him of his continued sway over her affections: but such a reason was not listened to by a young man of ardent passions, and excessive arrogance, accustomed to treat prudential considerations with senseless contempt. He declared himself ready to take upon him all the burthen of her family: would she but consent to a stolen

marriage, he would then have a motive for exertion; he would seek and obtain some lucrative employment, and if he failed, they could live in some sweet solitude altogether upon his income.

Women know too well, that men rarely do what they say upon such occasions: they generally make credit supply the place of money; and the consequences are obvious. Agnes stated amidst streaming tears, her many compelling reasons for believing it her duty to refuse herself such happiness as living in sweet retirement with him; could it indeed have been a solitude, she might have risked the danger of repentance. But her mother and sisters must share it:—they must know themselves pensioners upon her husband's small income; and if children were added, what was to be their fate? How, under such circumstances, were the younger Misses Clavering to have the slightest chance of becoming happy wives; and would it not be criminal in their sister to condemn them to lives of singlehood and dependence?

Lord Francis's peculiar infirmity of character was stimulated by this conscientious resistance: he had yet to unlearn a creed, too prevalent amongst the impassioned of his sex, ere a higher principle has operated upon their souls: he madly believed, that love was imperfect, unless it would concede every thing to a lover; and not to take advantage of such fond concessions might then be the proof of the conqueror's self-devotion in return. Lord Francis indeed thirsted for such an acknowledgment of his supremacy; and not receiving it, forgot every better feeling, in exasperated pride. He quitted the unhappy Agnes, with upbraidings and abjurations fit only for the lips of a madman. During the full frenzy of these transports he published the volume of anonymous poems, not meant for the world, but for her, who well knew the name he prefixed to them.

The cruel, almost killing effect of these poems, was effaced from the heart of Miss Clavering, by Fitz Arthur's kindly

explanation to her of the gambling affair, which had first caused their separation. This completely acquitted Fitz James, nay heightened his character for romantic honour; and coupled as it was with the narrator's amiable testimony to all that was really worthy in Lord Francis, awakened in Agnes the wish and the purpose of sacrificing to him every thing now her own, should he ever claim, or even appear to desire it.

Joyless, as a mere heiress, she had come to Monksden, thrilling with the hope of being once more sought by Lord Francis, though restrained by womanly delicacy, and some fear of its vanity, from owning such hope to her dearest connections. The accident which had brought her there, at the very time of Lord Francis's visit to Ravenshaw, animated her with the fancy that he might have come thither from previous knowledge of her purposed movements. The early engagement of Miss Clavering, together with the clause in Mrs. Branspeth's will, which kept her from return-

ing to it, under penalty of forfeiting the fortune in favour of Dora, were naturally reserved for the knowledge of as few persons as possible. Lady Henderson was totally ignorant of it, until after she had unluckily invited Lord Francis on the race-course, to dine at Monksden. Sir John sought a remedy for this evil, by directly telling Miss Clavering who would be amongst the company, hinting, that if it were disagreeable, she need not appear — her indifferent health might easily afford a pretext for absenting herself.

Miss Clavering had declined accepting such permission, although without stating whether she did so from present indifference to her former lover. Sir John was not her guardian, therefore had no right to question her; but he was not satisfied with her manner; and aware that Mrs. Branspeth had abhorred the idea of Lord Francis, rode off to Ravenshaw, with the hope of civilly demonstrating that His Lordship's company was not desired.

Lord Francis, however, was not then

to be stayed. Had Sir John looked out a little further upon human nature, than the limits of his own particular character, he might have guessed that such a man as Lord Francis would have been deterred by the fact he was concealing, and stimulated to go forward by the one he insinuated as a truth. A proud, pampered sensibility, jealous of any suspicion, recoiled from purposely seeking the woman who had so lately rejected him, and who had now, he thought, an enormous fortune to bestow: but the same imperious feeling urged him into Miss Clavering's presence, the moment he understood from the gossip then circulating, and the confirming half sentences of Sir John himself, that she was actually going to bestow her hand upon her young trustee.

In the full flame of an irritated passion, (conscious of the merit at least of invariable constancy,) Lord Francis had gone to Monksden: there his jaundiced eye saw indifference and insult, in apprehensive delicacy; and there his at-

tempt at a sentimental flirtation with Honoria, by way of showing his disregard of his mistress and his rival, was not quite so successful as his display of defying scorn. This last succeeded so completely in withering every hope — nay, for a time, every softer sentiment in the bosom of Agnes, that after her first extreme agony, when alone and abandoned to it on the neck of her sorrowing sister, she had vowed to tear him from her heart for ever.

But even so, Miss Clavering had never thought of admitting a second tyrant there: she contemplated only a life dedicated to general duties; and merely with such views, did she lean more confidentially upon the friendship and advice of Delaval Fitz Arthur. Poor Sir John Henderson was fated to make blunders. After this froward interview, he thought to ensure the safety of Miss Clavering, by letting her former lover know the terms upon which alone he might have appropriated her to himself; and with this view he detailed the particular

clause of Mrs. Branspeth's will, to Lady Wearmouth, authorizing her to impart them to his Lordship.

It is true, that the secret then disclosed, if done earlier, would indeed have prevented Lord Francis from dining at Monksden, coupled as it was with the confident assurance, that his fair charge was favourable to the obvious addresses of Fitz Arthur. As true, that its disclosure now produced a sudden revulsion of feeling in Lord Francis, highly favourable to his future impressions, though not calculated to make him renew his suit to Miss Clavering.

To become his wife, he now knew she must renounce large estates actually in possession, and make herself the theme of general wonder: she must also renounce a man whose character, even Lord Francis, in his *lucid intervals*, admitted to be far superior to his own in every sterling quality; and what had *he* to offer in their stead? A carelessly managed slender income, a useless life, and an ill-governed character.

The proud romance of his nature was again roused; but along with it a tenderer, juster fancy; insinuating that Agnes, not having the power of bestowing a fortune with herself, might, from a generous as well as delicate motive, have refrained from testifying the open attachment he had madly desired. — Then came regret, self-reproach,—lastly, self-condemnation. Had he not been idly wasting the years of a forced separation, sometimes in the hope of wresting his heart from her by a new affection, or by the glare of popular admiration; sometimes in the mere sullenness of despair, resolute to make all the other parts of his life a desert; what might have been his joyful, nay glorious triumph now, had he used those talents and that time in pursuing honourable employments? He might have sought her on the instant with a generous offer of his hand, with ample means of recompensing her, for what she was to lose by taking him: now, it was once more impossible: he would be

inviting her to comparative beggary, and from another's opened arms!

Pondering over such thoughts with an awakened mind, Lord Francis insensibly received from the conversation of Lady Wearmouth more lively impressions of future accountability, and the extreme danger of his own besetting sin, than he had ever yet known. The fruit of this was soon evident, in the moderated tone of his resentments, and in his instant acceptance of a situation, requiring some sacrifice of his proud personal freedom, and nearly all of his squandering time: he agreed to join the British Ambassador at Lisle, whilst Lord Wearmouth engaged to find for him against his return, some other official situation of higher consideration and responsibility. With such views Lord Francis had left Ravenshaw.

Miss Clavering, meanwhile, was silently endeavouring to uproot what she sincerely believed her insulted affection, so that her sister flattered herself she was actually won upon, by the very

different character of Delaval Fitz Arthur, whose friendly and solicitous pity she (in common with others, ignorant of his devotion to Honoria,) ascribed to the softest sentiment. Dora, therefore, had assisted in leading Mr. Mulcaster astray, when he thought himself privileged to ascertain the future intentions of Lord Francis, for the purpose of expediting his own peculiar wishes; and Lord Francis considering Miss Clavering as now publicly affianced to Fitz Arthur, had made his last farewell to her, an act which honoured his heart, and soon restored them to each other.

Just as he embarked for the Continent, he wrote to return her all those little memorials which lovers are fond to accumulate, and which he had hitherto determinately retained. He did it, avowing repentance for past imperiousness, past injustice to her, and rebellion against higher duties: he declared his late knowledge of the circumstances of Mrs. Branspeth's will, frankly owning what would have been his conduct, had not his

reckless hand thrown away the means of such a life as that which ought to be offered to her. Aware of her present prospects, he said, he yielded her to a wiser, happier choice; praying that every earthly blessing might await her and Fitz Arthur; and entreating her to pardon his own proud bearing when they met at Monksden.

In this letter, though full of deep, self-accusing tenderness, there was no inhuman threat of wilfully devoting himself to years of misery, no attempt made to excite alarm in the person to whom it was addressed. One short twelvemonth before, there would have been. Agnes felt the difference, saw the change, and her whole heart at once sprang back to its first and only love.

Miss Clavering waited but for her mother's arrival from Portugal, to sanction her purpose. Her mother's resistance to this proposal of abdicating her rights in favour of Dora, was at first vehement: it was conquered, however; and Delaval Fitz Arthur was then let into the secret.

— His agency conducted the delicate affair throughout. To prevent Dora's generous remonstrances, to spare herself useless combats with the prudent Sir John Henderson, and to shield her mother from perpetual well-meant or insidious persecution for consenting to such an extraordinary act as that of exchanging three large estates for £10,000, Miss Clavering entreated that the business might remain closely concealed, until actually brought to a termination.

Lord Francis, therefore, the grateful impatient Lord Francis, was obliged to remain with the embassy at Lisle, until Fitz Arthur had been to Ireland, and arranged certain matters with the Marquess of Killarney; meanwhile everything was to be preparing for their marriage; and Fitz James, nominated for another appointment at the Danish Court, was to return from Flanders merely in time to meet his bride on a given day at Aycliffe, where she was to be given to him by his once-dreaded rival.

All these circumstances had taken

place: Agnes Clavering was now Lady Francis Fitz James, and on her road to Scotland; whence she and her lord were to embark for Copenhagen.

From foregone rumour and expectation, from the perfect secrecy preserved concerning Lord Francis's restoration to favour, from Fitz Arthur's appearance in the bridal train, and from both his name and that of the bridegroom being partly the same, it was not surprising that even the people of Aycliffe itself, should have imagined their lady had bestowed herself upon the heir of Arthur's Court. Such a mistake explained to Honoria the decisive reply of the gate-keeper to the horseman:—a reply, which even now that it was blessedly disproved, she felt thrill her at every remembrance of it, like the summons of instant death.

During the private negotiation of Miss Clavering's strange transfer, William Mulcaster was kept as completely ignorant of it, as Sir Everard Fitz Arthur: the latter was pleasing himself with the notion that his son was indeed losing

his heart to Miss Clavering, and with Mrs. Shafto for his self-elected counsellor, kept up the appearance at least of unabated anger at Honoria. But his good-natured feelings were in fact often urgent with him to forgive one who looked so little triumphant, and whose offence did not threaten such ruinous consequences to Delaval's peace as he had at first dreaded; and the surprising discovery of her great share in Hylton's restoration, completed the revulsion of his sentiments.

This discovery was made before the more important one of her inward affection for the very man she had refused. Delaval had joined his family at Seaham, and there heard the details of his brother's illness. Hylton's imminent danger during the one eventful night, the previous difficulty of obtaining a suitable nurse, and the blessed result of her watching who did undertake the task, were often detailed, and as often heard with growing interest. Delaval was annoyed that no one could tell him

the name of the nurse, to whom under God he considered them all indebted for Hylton's preservation, he was not contented with his father's bounty to her of ten pounds; and assured that she must be one of their humble neighbours, went to Mr. Hudson the only day he was at Arthur's Court previous to Miss Clavering's marriage, and questioned him on the subject.

Mr. Hudson at first pleaded a bad memory, then tried to jest away the enquiry: but at length pressed more earnestly, from a new feeling of curiosity and perplexity in the questioner, began to consider whether a direct falsehood were worth his while to utter. The only reasons Miss O'Hara had given him for wishing the affair kept secret from Hylton's family, were, first the fear of being refused permission so to devote herself through grateful friendship, next the fear of incurring Sir Everard's displeasure for doing so without his sanction. The one reason was now void; the probability of the other,

Delaval himself might judge of. Mr. Hudson in short wished to tell his secret; and doing like many other half-way-good people, broke a solemn promise, that he might proclaim an amiable act.

The effect upon Fitz Arthur was almost stunning, — certain scales seemed to fall from his eyes; and when, after hurrying back to his father, he saw the change this history made upon him, his own emotions became even oppressively rapturous.

It cannot be denied that much of fond hope for himself, mingled with Fitz Arthur's grateful and overwhelming feelings on this occasion. Many a dear remembrance pressed upon him, vivid yet vanishing; thrills, excited by momentary suspicion of some preference for him in Honoria's unconscious breast; their scene at Mrs. Wilson's; his glimpse of her desolate countenance in the garden of Hazeldean; the few deeply imprinted words he had heard her utter at St. Cuthberts; — each and all of these agitated him with tumultuous thoughts and

kindled wishes. He looked towards his father, and saw his venerable face bathed in repentant tears. What was his joy, when he heard Sir Everard abruptly exclaim in sobbing accents, "Now then, Delaval, you have my full leave to try your luck again with that angel girl. I don't believe one word against her." — So kindly a burst convinced Fitz Arthur that Miss Clavering's large possessions had been little concerned in his father's wish of seeing him restored to peace and enjoyment by a fortunate marriage; and with such a conviction, he could eagerly seize the offered permission.

It was the very evening they were to proceed to Aycliffe, for Miss Clavering's marriage on the next morning. Delaval lingered behind his father that he might fly to Mrs. Preston, to whom he scarcely doubted Honoria must have confided many of her feelings, and probably her motives for such rare generosity to his alienated father.

Mrs. Preston was not at a time of life to be influenced by exaggerated delicacy: she saw that the whole earthly happiness of two deserving human beings, was at that moment in her hands: she scrupled not to secure it for them.

With scarcely an instant's hesitation, after having heard Fitz Arthur's satisfactory confession of unabated love, and never tarnished esteem for the absent Honoria, Mrs. Preston drew forth her last sad letter, saying how recently she had received, and how bitterly mourned over it; then putting it into Delaval's hands, left him to its silent perusal.

The result of this perusal is already known. Delaval Fitz Arthur was the happiest of men!

At least he called himself the happiest of men, for a short time after Honoria had acknowledged with her lips, the tender confession made by her pen: but even the best of Adam's sons are sometimes as impatient and ungrateful as their brethren. Fitz Arthur was not long of discovering that he was just short

of miserable, until those vows were uttered before the altar which sanctifies the glow of mutual love, and renders future separation impossible.

Honoria's mourning for Mrs. Meredith was necessarily shortened; and at the expiration of three months, she was married by the Dean of —— to the heir of Arthur's Court; Mr. Meredith's nervous sensibility having incapacitated him from doing more than giving her away.

It was the joyous season of Christmas at that time, and all the scattered members of the St. Cuthberts family were gathered under its roof; the Wearmouth family were come to Ravenshaw with Lady Haverford actually in their train, not by accident but purpose; Hazeldean had its amiable inmates re-assembled; Monksden boasted of the new heiress with her mother and sisters; and the race of Shafto were positively wintering at Bath!

Almost from the altar, Fitz Arthur and Honoria passed to the death-bed of

Dame Wilson. She had prayed to see the bride and bridegroom ere they went home from the church; and the nuptial benediction was yet thrilling in their ears, when they knelt together by her bed, to receive her dying blessing. It was the last effort of her breath; though she lived some hours after their departure.

A blessing so given, might well be deemed influential: for it carries twofold force with it. — May it not humbly be supposed to reach the throne of grace, for those over whose heads it is invoked in grateful memory of their Christian deeds; and at the same time be imagined dwelling for ever in their remembrance, as one of those minor incitements to perseverance in well-doing, which the gracious Giver of all good has given his creatures, in addition to the one great principle — love of himself?

Such at least were the cheering opinions whispered by Fitz Arthur to his awe-struck, weeping bride, as they descended together from that solemn

scene; banishing the momentary cloud of superstition, which he knew belonged to her character and her country, by avowing his own belief, that if omens might ever form part of a Christian's creed, he should consider their present call to perform an act of charity and kindness, as a new benediction upon their marriage. Honoria's first proof of obedience was that of drying her precious tears; she smiled at the tender mandate said to be uttered with authority; and soon restored every feeling of her heart, and every thought of her mind, to gratitude and joy.

The moment that saw her upon the threshold of Arthur's Court, and that in which she was presented as their present mistress, (for so Sir Everard would have it,) to the servants and tenantry gathered together in the hall and under the portico, were moments of overpowering happiness. She looked round her on the well-known faces of the old and valued domestics, on the respectable tenants, on the trees, the park, the long-endeared

house itself, till she was almost dizzy with recollection. And when she turned her filling eyes towards her husband, father, and brother, the sense of blessing overcame her quite; and putting her hand hastily into that of Fitz Arthur, tears bursting over her cheeks, she faintly exclaimed, "It is too much, — take me away!"

The remaining histories of other characters may be shortly related.

In spite of all the interest made for him by the host of recent brides, poor William Mulcaster was destined to one or two memorable disappointments. In the first place both his father and Mrs. Clavering were inexorable; *deservedly* earning the fearful epithets he bestowed upon them, of "*cruel,* — *hard-hearted,* — *most inhuman,*" they positively destined him to travel, any where except in Northumberland or London, from the first of February, until the far distant period of the first of June. After which, he having attained fully the age of dis-

cretion, and Dora gained four months' experience of life, and her own heart, amongst the multiplicity of persons and pleasures in the metropolis, he might return and enquire, if it were then her sovereign will to become — his slave!

In the next place, he did not realize his "pet scheme," of living with Dora in the Bower Cottage; but had Aycliffe Castle inflicted upon him, maugre their mutual efforts to find a way of getting it thrown back upon Lady Francis Fitz James.

Lastly, he did not rear up a numerous progeny upon the salts and sands of the sea; Providence blessing him with only the ordinary number of children, and their youthful mother taking infinite pains to render better medicine necessary for them, by a more luxurious diet.

On this subject, indeed, it is suspected their only matrimonial quarrels ever occurred. Dora loved to indulge the children, as she did their father; and William, wisely conscious how much he

had had to unlearn, in consequence of his sister's fond spoiling, endeavoured to enact as sage laws in his own house, as he was said to attempt in the House of Commons.

After three years' residence in a Northern Court, Lord and Lady Francis Fitz James, were recalled to their country, by their Sovereign's nomination of Lord Francis to an honourable employment under government. His character strongly acted upon by former suffering, and by an increasing sense of his own blameable dispositions, Lord Francis had been powerfully affected by the generous sacrifice made to him by the woman whose principles and affections he had so long outraged: and after she became his wife, her improved qualities and firmer convictions gradually assisted his own efforts in weeding out "the tares" from his heart. The transient tyranny of an impetuous temper, (more difficult to subdue than even louder passions,) was cheerfully borne

by her sweetness; so that if their matrimonial sky were not always so unclouded as that of the Stanhopes, the Barringtons, and our heroine, the two parties living under its alternate brief cloud and immediate brilliancy, preferred such change to unvaried azure.

The Rectory, new-modelled by Honoria's delighted order, ere she quitted it for Arthur's Court, became a cheerful and comfortable residence; and Mr. Meredith reposing there in perfect peace, scarcely regretted that when he wanted the light of his niece's countenance, he must seek it at Arthur's Court. Under that roof were now collected the objects most dear to him; and as Hylton grew in years and thought, as his powers of high usefulness developed themselves, and his young heart was devoted with holier ardour to the promotion of Christian knowledge, Mr. Meredith associating himself with his pupil's views, upon more intimate terms of heart and head, found the charm of deep interest spreading over his life.

Mrs. Preston basked in the sunshine of the extraordinary happiness she saw around her; and Hazeldean itself seemed actually to smile, when any one of her many favourites entered under its flowery porch. She loved to believe herself the chief instrument of Delaval Fitz Arthur's joyful lot; and she often reminded Honoria of her sagacity, during the period of that young lady's insolent abuse of power. Miss Dulcy followed the fashion of the neighbourhood, and married a respectable Yorkshire squire: Miss Bella lived and died in single blessedness.

Long after the 150th regiment changed its quarters, Colonel Mason contrived often to revisit Edenfell; performing his tour of the different houses round, (where he was a welcome guest,) and managing, not only to retain his ancient privilege of being quarrelled for, by the beauties of his earliest days in Northumberland, but acquiring that of claiming the same homage from the next succession of county belles.

Awful, signally awful was the fate of the Shafto family! — with them,

"The starless night of desolation reign'd."

Mr. Spratt never re-appeared: Mr. Tudor married a rich widow: Miss Matilda never had an offer from Mr. Meredith of Thoresby: the eldest son ran off with the Columbine of a new pantomime during his last Eton vacation, and the eldest of the twins followed this precious example.

The bold-faced, curly-headed Jemima eloped with an emigrant whom she had danced with at a ball; and after a due period of reprobation and exile, was finally restored to the paternal roof, by favour of her husband's high-sounding title. If to have the power of addressing her daughter by the name of Madame la Comtesse, and her son-in-law by that of Monsieur le Comte, were any comfort to the distressed mother, it was a consolation never withdrawn. Mrs. Shafto's ear continued to be tickled with such sounds, even after the events of twenty

succeeding years had recalled emigrants of undoubted rank and character to their country and their patrimony, under the sceptre of a Bourbon.

Hetty Macready lived to hold three of her foster-child's children in her arms, to feel their little arms twine with fondness round her neck, and to hear them lisp her name coupled with many an endearing epithet.

Thomas Fitz Arthur humanized whilst playing with, and protecting, his infant nephews and niece. He never made much figure in life, nor much progress in emulating his elder brothers; but he stopt short of actual badness, and remained only most particularly disagreeable: at least so Captain Barrington privately reported him to Isabella, after he had initiated the boy in his own noble profession during a six months' cruise.

If the ungracious character of their young brother was all that alloyed the happiness of Delaval Fitz Arthur and Honoria, were they not blest beyond most other human beings? They felt

that they were so; and gladly welcoming so small an evil, pressed their other treasures on their hearts, whilst raising up their souls in joy and thankfulness to that Benefactor, who gave them such treasures, and required but the cheerful endurance of a single affliction.

THE END.

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